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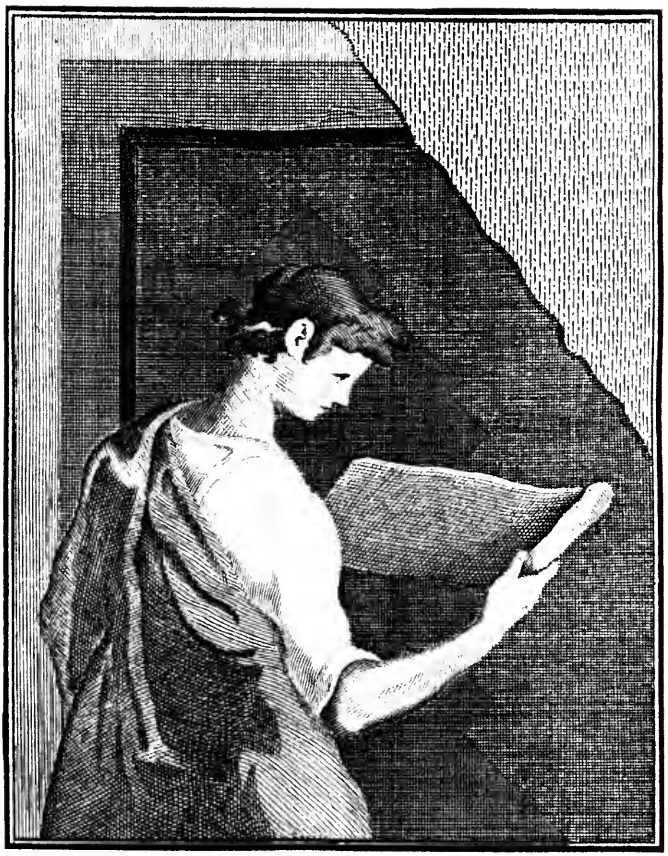

CITIES OF ITALY

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BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

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TO MADAME LA COMTESSE DE LA TOUR

As you know, and, I sometimes think, regret, I am one of those for whom the visible world exists, very actively; and, for me, cities are like people, with souls and temperaments of their own, and it has always been one of my chief pleasures to associate with the souls and temperaments congenial to me among cities. And as love, or it may be hate, can alone reveal soul to soul, among human beings, so, it seems to me, the soul of a city will reveal itself only to those who love, or, perhaps, hate it, with a far-sighted emotion. I have come upon many cities which have left me indifferent, perhaps through some accident in my way of approach; at any rate, they had nothing to say to me: Madrid, for instance, and Vienna, and St. Petersburg, and Berlin. It would be impossible for me to write about these cities: I should have nothing to say. But certain other cities, Rome, Venice, Seville, how I have loved them, what a delight it was to me merely to be alive, and living in them; and what a delight it is to me to think of them, to imagine myself in their streets and on their waters! Moscow, Naples, how I have hated them,

how I have suffered in them, merely because I was there; and how clearly I see them still, with that sharp memory of discomfort! It seems to me that all these cities have given up to me at least something of their souls, like the people I have loved and hated on my way through the world. At least they have given me what they had to give me, like the people: my part of their souls. For we can see or receive, in people or things, only our own part of them: the vision rising in our own eyes, the passion rising in our own hearts.

This is not saying that I have not tried to do more than write a kind of subjective diary, in which the city should be an excuse for my own sensations. I have put myself as little as possible into these pages; I have tried to draw confidences out of the stones that I have trodden but a few weeks or a few months, out of the faces that I have seen in passing, out of the days of sunshine that have after all warmed a stranger. I have respected the sight of my eyes and the judgment of my senses, and I have tried to evoke my cities in these pages exactly as they appeared to me to be in themselves. It is part of my constant challenge to myself, in everything I write, to be content with nothing short of that *vraie vérité* which one imagines to exist somewhere on this side of ultimate attainment. It is so much easier to put oneself into things than to persuade things to give up their own secrets; and I like to aim at this difficult kind of truth.

What is truth? you will say: yes, the old question, which no one has ever answered. I am only explaining my intentions.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

CHÂTEAU DE CHAMÉANE,
PUY DE DÔME, *August*, 1903.

Part of this book was provisionally published in 1903 as the Italian section of a book of "Cities," which I do not intend to reissue, in its original form. Here I have brought together, into something more like unity, all that I have to say about Italy, and I hope later to do the same with my scattered writings, in "Cities" and elsewhere, on Spain. I have repeated the dedication of the book in which I made my first attempts at the interpretation of places, because, though I am here limiting myself to Italy, my intention remains the same.

WITTERSHAM, *July*, 1907.

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ROME

ROME

I

THE last sunset of the year had been stormy; the whole sky, as I saw it from the Pincio, blazed like a conflagration; fire caught the farthest roofs of Rome, and seemed to sear the edges and outskirts of the city, like a great flame coming down from heaven. This flame burnt with an unslackening ardency long after the sun had gone down below the horizon; then the darkness began to creep about it, and it grew sombre, drooping into purple, withering into brown, dwindling into a dull violet, and from that wandering into a fainter and fainter greyness, until the roofs, jutting like abrupt shadows into the night, seemed to go up like smoke all round the city, as if the great fire were smouldering out. Darkness came on rapidly, there was no moon, and as I stood, just before midnight, by the side of the Forum, under the shadow of the Arch of Septimius Severus, I seemed at first to be standing at the edge of a great black abyss. Gradually, as I looked down, I became aware of a sort of rocky sea, a dark sea of white and slender rocks, which, as I watched them,

seemed to heighten into the night. Near the triumphal arch I could distinguish the eight smooth columns of the Temple of Saturn; there, on the other side of this gulf, was the Palatine; and but a little to my left, though unseen, the Arch of Titus, and the Colosseum. In those imperishable ruins, which are still, after more than twenty centuries, the true Rome, the Rome which really exists, I saw the only human immortality which I had ever visibly seen. The twelve strokes of midnight, coming from the Christian churches on all sides, sounded faintly, as if they did but reckon the time of years, not of centuries. It was Pagan Rome that lasted, and Pagan Rome means humanity, working regardless of itself, and with the world at its feet, as a quarry to build from. This Rome, even in ruins, bows the mind before its strength, its purpose, its inflexible success. I had come to Rome thinking that it was as the city of the Popes that I should see the Eternal City. I was filled only with a sense of the power of things earthly, the eternity of an art wholly the work of men's hands, as I turned away from the Forum, in those first moments of the new year. I looked back: the Arch of Septimius Severus stood up white and gigantic, blotting out the sky.

The soul of Rome, as one gradually realises it, first, I think, and not least intimately, from the Aurelian Wall, then from the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Forum, the Stadium, and then piece by

piece, from the Vatican, the Diocletian, the Capitoline galleries of sculpture, is a very positive soul, all of one piece, so to speak, in which it is useless to search for delicate shades, the mystery of suggestion, a meaning other than the meaning which, in a profound enough sense, is on the surface. All these walls, columns, triumphal arches, the façade of the Pantheon, have nothing to tell us beyond what they were meant to tell; and they were meant to answer certain very definite purposes, and to do their work splendidly indeed, but without caprice. This simplicity of purpose is what makes Roman architecture so much more satisfying than even fine Renaissance architecture; and there is little fine Renaissance work in Rome: the Cancellaria, a palace or two. In architecture, more perhaps than in any other art, nothing is so easily comprehended, so immediate in its appeal to the instinct, as that greatest art, which is classic. Think for a moment of St. Peter's, while you stand before the outer wall of the Colosseum. That shell of rough stone-work, from which every trace of ornamentation is gone, gives, even at first sight, a sense of satisfaction, because of the easy way in which those perfectly natural proportions answer to the unconscious logic of the eye, notwithstanding the immensity of the scale on which they are carried out; while St. Peter's leaves you bedazed, wondering, inquiring, as before a problem of which you have not the key. For beauty of detail, for the charm which is not the mathematical

charm of proportion, the moral charm of strength, the material charm of grandeur, do not come to Rome. You will find no detail neglected, for all detail is part of a whole; but you will find no detail over which the workman has grown amorous, into which he has put something of his soul, over and above the work of his hands.

To the Roman mind, as I have come to realise it for myself, after a winter in Rome spent in trying to make my general notion of these things particular, the world about one was always a very real, very desirable thing, quite enough for one's whole needs in a life which was at once a brief flutter of that winged thing, "animula, vagula, blandula," and also a moment which it was possible to perpetuate, by the work of one's hands, or the hands of slaves, working to order. In a world which seemed to lie at their feet, conquered, the sense of power, which the Romans had in so actual a degree, sharpened their desire to appropriate all the resources of what lay there before them, to enjoy its whole beauty, and to leave behind them, by their own effort, the assurance of what they had so vividly enjoyed. That monument of the baker, outside the Porta Maggiore, made to imitate the homely utensils of his trade, and still telling us that Marcus Vergilius Erysaces, who lies under those stones, sold his bread in the city, seems to me a significant indication of this resolute hold on the earth, on the day's work, and this resolution to perpetuate it. It is the

more significant because for the most part a mere citizen in Rome must have counted for very little. As the world was for Rome, so Rome was for the State, and the State, after all, was for the Cæsars.

And so it is that we find the one really satisfying work in sculpture left by the Romans to be the Antinous, repeated over and over again, in an almost mechanical carrying out of the will of Hadrian, but coming, at its best, to a kind of perfection. Antinous is the smile of the eternity of youth, and the smile is a little sad, for all its gracious acceptance of the sunlight. It is sad with youth's sensitive consciousness of the first cold breath of wind which comes to trouble that sunlight; a wistfulness which is the wistfulness of animals, and in which the soul and its regrets have no part. Perfect bodily sensitiveness; the joy and sadness which are implicit in mere human breathing; a simplicity of sensation which comes at once into the delightful kingdom of things, which we are so painful in our search for, and thus attains a sort of complexity, or its equivalent, without knowing it; life taken on its own terms, and without preference of moment to moment: it is all this that I find in the grave, and smiling, and unthinking, and pensive head of Antinous, in that day-dream of youth, just conscious enough of its own felicity for so much the more heightened an enjoyment of that passing moment.

II

Looking at Antinous, or at a young Roman model who lies on those spectacular steps of the Trinità de' Monti to-day, you realise that the Romans were born without a soul, and that in all these centuries of Christendom they have never acquired one. It has been the genius of the Catholic religion, whose temporal seat, so appropriately, has always been at Rome, to divine and to respond to this temperamental tendency of the people who have given it power. At Rome it is natural to found empires; the seven hills await them. Religion never could be mystical at Rome; it must have its part in the world, with all the power of the world, and all the world's hold on temporal felicity, and it is by an appeal to after all largely the Pagan sentiment in life and thought that the Popes have been able to succeed the Cæsars. Never was any "mystical city of God" so solidly based on the stable powers of the earth. Church has succeeded temple, and you find the church superincumbent, quite literally, as in San Clemente, stratum above stratum, the chapel of Mithra under the apse of the Christian basilica; or, as in San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, where church after church, built over and into one another, is supported by columns, crowded with friezes, set together without design or order, out of ancient temples or palaces. Just as the theatre, dancing, music, were a part or appendage of the State religion, so the Church has

taken to itself all that is finest in spectacle, all that is rarest in singing. Those perfumed and golden gifts of the three old Magi to the young Christ, the gift of the world and its delicacies, were not given in vain. All the churches in Rome are full of incense and gold.

To see St. Peter's is to realise all that is strongest, most Roman, nothing that is subtle or spiritual, in the power of the Church. This vast building, the largest church in the world, imposes itself upon you, wherever you are in Rome; you see the dome from the Alban or the Sabine hills, from which the whole city seems dwindled to a white shadow upon a green plain. Before it lies all Rome, behind it the vague desolation of fruitless fields, ruinous houses, a mouldering wall, a few ragged trees. I climbed one evening, about sunset, on a day when the sky itself had the desolation of brooding storms, to the strip of narrow, untrodden ground behind it, which rises from the Via Scaccia, going down on the other side to the Via della Zecca. It stood there hiding the whole city and half the sky, a vast grey bulk; now and again the moon, looking through a rift in the clouds, touched the leaden roof with a finger of light; the cypresses, seeming to lean against the white walls at the base, turned blacker; a few gas lamps shone about it like gold candles about the high altar; and gradually, as I watched, light after light sprang up out of the deep streets and precipitous houses, the hills grew darker, and more

vague, and the solid mass itself, now a looming greyness, seemed to float like a great shadow into the depths of the night. And always, by day, looked at from within or without, it is by its immensity, its spectacular qualities, that it is impressive. To walk across the floor is like taking a journey; voices chanting in a side chapel can only just be heard from the opposite aisle; and, looking at the four piers which support the dome, one remembers that the church of San Carlino alle Quattro Fontane, by no means a small church, is exactly the size of one of those four piers. Everything, the whole decoration, in order that it may be in proportion to the scale of the building, is exaggerated, and almost no detail bears an intimate examination, or can give one a separate sensation of pleasure; for the few lovely things, like Michelangelo's Pietà, are lost in little chapels, where they exist quietly, in their corners, like a fine, silent criticism of all this display, these florid Popes and angels, this noisy architectural rhetoric. And St. Peter's, impressing you, as it certainly does, with its tremendous size, strength, wealth, and the tireless, enduring power which has called it into being, holds you at a distance, with the true ecclesiastical frigidity. You learn here how to distinguish between what is emotional and what is properly ecclesiastical in the Catholic Church. St. Peter's is entirely positive, dogmatic, the assertion of the supremacy of the Church over the world; never mystic, as in one of those dim Spanish cathe-

drals, that of Barcelona, for instance; nor yet fantastic, full of strange, precious wonders of the world, brought from far off, as in St. Mark's. It is florid, spectacular, but never profane; suggesting, as it does, what is the strength, and what are also the metaphysical limitations of the Church, it never suggests, as St. Mark's does, the human curiosities which may become a strange vice, as easily as a singular virtue. Nor is it, like St. Mark's, in the midst of the city, where the heart of the city beats, where one sees a homely crowd wandering in and out all day long, looking in on the way home from market, as one might look in for a moment at a friend's house.

High Mass at St. Peter's, as I saw it on Christmas Day, said by Cardinal Rampolla, was an impressive ceremony, indeed, but it was said mainly to a crowd of curious strangers. The large, rigid figure in the red robes and the gold mitre, who sat there under his golden vestments, lifting a white-gloved hand on whose third finger shone the emerald ring set with diamonds, performed the sacred functions with a dignity which was a little weary, and in the priest's expressionless way, with that air of fixed meditation (as of a continual commerce with heaven) which is the Church's manner of expressing disapproval of the world. Where I seemed to see a real devotion was in the peasants from the Campagna, who passed with their rough cloaks rolled round them, and kissed St. Peter's foot devoutly, leaning their fore-

heads against it; the women carefully rubbing the toe with their handkerchiefs before kissing it. I saw the same deep feeling in a fifteenth-century church into which I went that afternoon, S. Agostino, a church famed for its devotion. A whole wall was covered with little gilt-framed votive offerings, silver hearts, and pious vows, and in front of them many poor old women sat and knelt, praying with closed eyes; others lifted their children to kiss the foot of Sansovino's patrician Virgin, the compassionate Madonna del Parto. I found a different, but perhaps not less sincere, company of worshippers in San Luigi dei Francesi, before that screen of candles, like burning gold, gold light rising flamelike out of gilt candlesticks, which enshrined for their devotion the unseen presence of the Sacrament. But at the midnight Mass in the same church, which was attended by a special permission, I was once more in that atmosphere of positive, unspiritual things which I had breathed in St. Peter's, and which seemed to me so typical of Rome. The church was filled to its farthest corner by a brilliant crowd; the music, played by organ, harp, and strings, and sung by somewhat uncertain voices, was florid and brilliant; and far off, at the golden end of the church, white against the gold light, seven rows of candles rising like an arch of pure gold, the priests moved through the sacred ritual. Near me were some Italians, two of them women of the finest aristocratic type, with faces carved like cameos, a

touch of cruelty in their dark, vivid, reticent dignity; and these faces, looking on as at a show, and prepared to look away the moment it was no longer amusing, seemed to bring all the strength of the world's hold on one into the perfumed atmosphere of the place. Looking, as I could not but look, at these beautiful Pagan faces, perfect as Roman medals, I felt that they were Rome, and that Rome was at least sure of this world, whatever her admiration, her curiosity, her possible dreams, of another.

III

"The grandeur that was Rome": that phrase of Poe's sums up perfectly the impression which Rome, even now, makes upon the observer. The secret of what is most impressive there is the choice (miraculous, we are led to suppose, and can well believe) of its site. A city built upon seven hills, hills which have arranged themselves, naturally, with such an art of impressive composition, can have no rival among the cities of the world in its appeal to the sense of material grandeur. That the Senate should throne itself upon the Capitol, that the palaces of the Cæsars should have been on the Palatine or the Esquiline, was an almost incalculable aid to the pomp of State. St. Peter's, seen in the sky from all Rome, thrones Catholicism on a similar eminence. Everything in Rome impresses by its

height, by an amplitude of adjusted proportions, which is far more than the mere equivalent of vast spaces covered, as in London, invisible for its very size. The pride of looking down, the pride of having something to look up to, are alike satisfied for the Romans, by what nature and art have done for Rome.

This Roman grandeur began by being colossally simple. I find all the grandeur of Rome in even so late a work as the Aurelian Wall, and that is nothing but a bare, brown, precipitous line of masonry, patched with the mendings of all the ages. The Colosseum, the Pantheon, for all their original splendour of decoration, still exist with such potency, now that they are reduced to the bare elements of their construction, because the simplicity of that construction was the primary concern of Vespasian and Titus, of Agrippa and Hadrian, in building them. Effect is aimed at, and the effect is always that of impressing by size; but the effect is sought legitimately, with the finest materials, their most natural, however sumptuous, arrangement, and that Roman way of going straight to an end, like their roads, though at the cost of an army of men, a treasury of gold. In the work of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, of the seventeenth century, we find the same effect aimed at, but with a sumptuousness not duly subordinated, and turning frequently (as in the extravagances of the typical Bernini) into colossal bad taste. Yet still, to this

moment, Rome is the most pompous, the most magnificent, of Western cities. Was there ever a more imposing public square than that vast, florid Piazza del Popolo, by which, before the days of the railway, strangers entered Rome? almost nowhere entirely commendable in detail, but with what an art of effect in its remote corners, into which no crowd can stretch, its three long, straight, narrow vistas into the city, its terraced and columned heights, its great gateway. The square in which St. Peter's stands, with that colonnade which Bernini set up in his one moment of genius; the dark irregular, half-concealed palace of the Vatican holding on to a corner of the great church; the square itself, with its obelisk, the two fountains, the stones worn by all the pilgrims of the world; no other square makes quite the same appeal to one, or suggests so much of the world's history. And how impressive, certainly how sumptuous, are all these immense, never quite architecturally satisfying churches, heaped against the sky at the corner of every square, dignifying the poverty of even the humblest streets, leaving, like San Paolo fuori le Mura, infinite riches run to waste in the unpopulated Campagna! You can scarcely walk for five minutes in any direction without coming on something, perhaps incongruous where it is, like the eleven Corinthian columns of Hadrian's Temple of Neptune, forty feet high, now filled up with modern brick-work, and made into the Exchange; something absolutely startling, some-

thing vast and sudden, it may be only the Trevi Fountain, it may be the Theatre of Marcellus, the Capitol itself. And the appropriate *décor* of life awaits every occasion, ready set; for what occasion is there in life which was not anticipated and prepared for, with learned, foreseeing taste, centuries ago, in those times when Rome had perfected the arts of life as now only the Eastern races ever dream of perfecting them? Think, in the baths of Caracalla or of Diocletian, among the trees and ruins of the Palatine; or, with less of the historic effort, in the gardens of the Villa Albani, with their alleys of shaven box, carved into niches for statues; of the Villa Borghese, with their avenues of ilex, their grassy amphitheatre; of the Villa Doria-Pamphili, which is like an English park, laid out by a French gardener; in the Bosco of the Villa Medici, wild and delicate, with its staircase going up between the trees to the sky; think what a *décor* lies before one, gone to waste, or at least wasted, for a life of the most triumphant pleasure! To live in Rome is to understand all the coloured and spectacular vices of the Cæsars, all the elaborate sins of the Renaissance. Occasions so great as these have gone, but the possibilities remain, awaiting only their opportunity.

IV

Rome is a sea in which many worlds have gone

down, and its very pavement is all in waves; so that to drive through these narrow streets, and across these broad squares, in which there is no footway over which a wheel may not drive, is like rocking in a boat on slightly uneasy water. The soil everywhere heaves over still buried ruins, which may hold (who knows?) another Apoxyomenos. And, as no other great city in the world is, the whole of Rome is one vast museum, in which the very galleries, palaces, churches, which contain the finest of its treasures, are themselves but single items in that museum which is Rome. And what gives to all this precisely its special charm, and also its special value to the student, is that Rome is still a living city, the capital of a nation, and with an actual life of its own, which, often enough, can be seen in its direct descent from antiquity. The Roman people have always had a sense of the continuity of their national life, of their literal part in the inheritance of their ancestors. One sees it, sometimes with a quaint grotesqueness, in the simple-minded way in which, just as they Christianised Pagan temples, so they have always taken to themselves and turned to their own uses the monuments of all the ages: Pasquino, Marforio, Madama Lucrezia, the Bocca della Verità; the religion of one age becoming the mouthpiece for the satire or criticism of the next, as the Pagan gods in exile, in the Christian Middle Ages, became demons, haunting the souls of men with their perilous beauty. One sees it, at the present day, in that

singular deification of Vittorio Emanuele, which is really an apotheosis, after the manner of the apotheoses of the Roman emperors; and quite after their ruthless manner is that waste of thousands of pounds in the destruction of certain old streets, which were beautiful, for the proper view of an equestrian statue, which will be hideous. And then, in the actual museums, the palace of the Vatican, the palace of the Conservatori, the baths of Diocletian, what a prepared atmosphere one finds and how much more at home in these courts, frescoed halls, papal summer-houses, Carthusian cloisters, is all this white, chosen humanity of statues, which, if they "remember their august abodes," must certainly pine less for Greece, which they left so early, than any other marble beings in the world. Since I have been in Rome I have realised, for myself, many things about Greek art, which not all the study of sculpture in London, Paris, and Berlin has taught me; and I have been able to see it, not only as the greatest, the most "classic" art of the world, but as the most living, responsive, intimately delightful. And this is certainly because I have seen it where it could be seen more like something in its natural place, less like something on show, than anywhere out of Greece.

And in painting, too, one has the opportunity of making certain not unsimilar discoveries. Rome is not rich in easel-pictures, nor yet in altar-pieces, but it is only in Rome that it is possible to realise, to

the full extent of their gifts and limitations, the pictorial genius of Michelangelo, of Raphael, and of Pinturicchio. Michelangelo in the decoration of the Sistine Chapel, Raphael in the decoration of the Stanze and Logge, Pinturicchio in the decoration of the Appartamento Borgia, of the Vatican, is seen working as the painter loves to work, in the one really satisfying way in which he can work, architecturally, for the adornment of a given space, which is part of the essential life of a building. And so these frescoes, as no picture in a museum could ever be, are an actual part of Rome, precisely as much a part of it as the Vatican itself.

In the Sistine Chapel there are admirable paintings by Botticelli, by Signorelli, by Perugino, but one can see nothing there but Michelangelo. And the emotion of first seeing this immense world created by Michelangelo seized me with a delighted awe, such as I could imagine to have stirred in the soul of Adam when he awoke and beheld the world. Other things are beautiful, exquisite, subtle, but these seem to contain all beautiful and exquisite and subtle things, and to disregard them. In the passion of this overwhelming life which burns through every line, there is for once the creating joy of the artist, flawless, unimpaired, unchecked, fulfilling its desire as not even the Greeks have done; for desire, in them, was restrained by a sense of delicate harmony, to which it was the triumphant self-sacrifice of their art to conform. Here we have

no sense of even so much of mortal concession to the demands of immortality; but the unbounded spirit seems to revel in the absoluteness of its freedom. Here, at last, here indeed for the first time is all that can be meant by sublimity; a sublimity which attains its pre-eminence through no sacrifice of other qualities; a sublimity which (let us say it frankly) is amusing. I find the magnificent and extreme life of these figures as touching, intimate, and direct in its appeal as the most vivid and gracious realism of any easel-picture: God, the Father and the Son, the Virgin, the men and women of the Old Testament, the Sibyls, the risen dead of the Last Judgment, all these tremendous symbols of whatever has been divined by the spirit or sought out by the wisdom of the ages crowd upon one with the palpable, irresistible nearness of the people who throng one in one's passage through the actual world. It seemed to me then, it still seems to me, strange that I should have felt it, but never before had I felt so much at home among paintings, so little of a mere spectator. One seems to be of the same vivid and eternal world as these joyous and meditative beings, joyous and meditative even in hell, where the rapture of their torment broods in eyes and limbs with the same energy as the rapture of God in creation, of the woman in disobedience, or of Isaiah in vision. They are close to one, I think, partly because they are so far away; because no subtlety in the eyes or lips, no delicacy in the fold

of garments, none of the curious and discoverable ways by which art imitates and beautifies nature, can distract one from the immediate impress of such passionate and obsessing life. Art ceases to approach one directly, through this sense or that, through colour, or suggested motion, or some fancied outlook of the soul; it comes straight to one, boldly, seizing one at once by that instinct of immediate recognition, by which, except here, only perhaps the direct works of God have ever approached and revealed themselves to the soul of man.

Now turn to Raphael. Here, on the contrary, we have art so obvious in its concealment of art that it becomes the idol of the crowd, and ceases to interest the more curious dreamer before pictures. Raphael is the instinctively triumphant perfection of the ideal of the average man; he is what scarcely the greatest of painters can be, and what only mediocre painters have desired to be. Here is the simplicity of what is called inspiration: the ease of doing, better than any one else, what the greater number would like, better than anything else, to do. And he is miraculous; yet a miracle which just fails to interest one; because, I think, he is essentially exterior, and his pictures a dream of the hand rather than a dream of the soul. Even that peace which he can convey with so delicate a power seems to me rather the slumber than the ecstasy of peace. His Madonnas have no foresight in their eyes of the seven swords with which the

divine child is to pierce their breasts. His gracious saints have never, before they attained sanctity, suffered all the enlightening ardours of sin. His martyrs have no memory, either of death, by which they have passed, or of heaven, to which they have come. All the persons of his pictures live, somewhat unthinkingly, in the moment which their gesture perpetuates; they have but that gesture. We see eternity in the moment of fierce meditation which Michelangelo calls up before us, as if thought in the brows and hands were about to relax or resolve itself into some other of the unaccountable moods of so elemental a being. In the painful, intense face of a Velasquez we see the passionate frailties, the morbid, minute hatreds of a long race of just such suffering and reticent beings. And in the smile which wanders, lurking in the imperceptible corner of lip or eyelid, across the faces of Leonardo, we see the enigma of whatever is most secret, alluring, inexplicable, in the mysterious charm of human beauty; that look which seems to remember, and is perhaps only a forgetfulness. But the people of Raphael live in the content of that one gracious moment in which they lift their hands in prayer or benediction, or open their untroubled eyes to that moment's sunlight.

The art of Pinturicchio, which can now, since the opening of the Appartamento Borgia in the Vatican, be studied more completely at Rome than even at Siena, is another, a more primitive, but not less

individual art. Those frescoes, simply as decorations, are as beautiful as any decorations that were ever done; and they are at once an arabesque, in which everything seems to exist simply in order that it may be a moment's beautiful colour on a wall, and a piece of homely realism, in which every figure seems to be a portrait, and every animal, tree, and jewel to be painted for its own sake. There is not a little naïveté in the design, a technique in which there is none of the confident sureness of hand of either Raphael or Michelangelo, but a certain hesitation, an almost timid recourse to such expedients as the use of stucco in relief, and even of painted wood, glued upon the flat surface to represent a tower or a gateway. But you feel that the man has something to say, that, to be more accurate, he sees pictures; and that this simple and sumptuous and real and imaginary world, which he has called into being in order that it may remind us of the world about us, and be more beautiful, and so be a delight to the eyes and a repose to the soul, is not only an unsurpassed piece of decoration, but the revelation of a temperament to which beauty was perhaps more beautiful for its own sake than to any other painter. Pinturicchio loves the world, animals, trees, human faces, the elegance of men and women in courtly, coloured dresses, youth with its simple pride of existence, kings for their gold and purple robes, saints for the divine calm of their eyelids and the

plaintive grace of their slim hands, all the world's beauty as it comes up like the flower of the grass, and especially that beauty which takes no thought of itself; and he loves it with so simple and humble and absorbing a love that he paints it just as he sees it, almost without thinking of his own share in the work. That is why this select and coloured world of his, in which there is no passionate or visionary life, as in Michelangelo, nor that composed and conscious presence in time and space of the people of Raphael, lives with such simplicity, as if filled with a calm and joyous sense of its own beauty. To live under the decorations of Michelangelo would be as exhausting as to live in a world in which every person was a person of genius. To live amongst the decorations of Raphael would be to live amongst people of too placid, too amiable disposition, and too limited intelligence; it would become a weariness, But one need never cease to live happily amongst the men and women whom Pinturicchio saw walking in beautiful robes, that were never woven so finely by hands in meadows of gold flowers, that never grew out of the brown earth, always finding heaven, a heaven of chrysoprase and chalcedony, at a turn of the way, and without surprise; for these and their abode have the beauty that we desire to find in the world, in what is most homely, obvious, and frequent in it, the beauty that is there, if we could see it, and the beauty that for the most part we do not see, because we are too

sophisticated, too conscious of ourselves, and because we discover too thoughtful a consciousness of themselves in natural things.

V

To realise the greatness of Rome, it is not enough to have seen the Colosseum, St. Peter's, the churches, palaces, ruins, squares, fountains, and gardens; you may have seen all these, and yet not have seen the most beautiful possession of Rome: the Campagna. Seen from the Alban hills, Rome is a mere cluster of white houses in a desert, a desert as variable in colour as the sky. Lost in that wilderness, a speck between that wilderness and the sky, it seems a mere accident in a visible infinity. And now remember that this vast Campagna is simply the pleasure park of Rome: that it is left there, feverous and unproductive, the loveliest of ruins, in order that Rome may have the pride of possessing it; and think if any city in the world possesses so costly and magnificent a luxury.

It is one of the many delicate surprises of Rome to come suddenly, at the end of a street which had seemed lost in the entanglements of the city, upon a glimpse of the Campagna or the hills. And those hills, rising up from the plain to the sky, their soft lines, under certain weather, indistinguishable from either, opalescent, changing colour as the wind scatters or heaps the clouds, as sunlight or scirocco

passes over them, have something of the untiring charm, the infinite variety, of the sea. Drive a little way into the Campagna, and you might be on the Pampas, or in the desert which is about the ruins of Thebes. An almost audible silence descends upon you, in which the world seems asleep. A shepherd leans motionless upon his staff; the sheep move drowsily about him; and you hear the tinkle of the bell.

To see Tivoli, loud and white with waterfalls, a little grey town set upon grey and cloven rocks, fringed with the silvery green of olive trees; to see any one of the *castelli*, one would willingly cross a whole country; and they lie, Frascati, Albano, Genzano, Marino, Ariccia, Rocca di Papa, at the very gates of Rome, within the compass of one day's drive. These *castelli* are all fantastic and improbable; white, huddled, perched like flights of white birds that have settled there; hanging over volcanic chasms that have burst into lakes, fertilised into vines and olives; wild trees, their grey trunks leaning this way and that, seeming to face up and down the hillside, like armies meeting in battle; each *castello* with its own rococo villas, like incrustations upon the rock; each *castello* set on its own hill, as if it had drawn up the ladder after having climbed there: a little city of refuge from the perils of the plain. They hold the Alban Lake between them, and Lake Nemi, which sleeps with the deepest sleep of any lake I have ever seen, in the most restful arms of

land. And each has its own aspect. Frascati, as one turns in and out of its streets, opening suddenly on vague glimpses, as if cut by the sides of a frame, is like a seaside village; and one cannot help imagining the wash of waves, instead of the grassy plain of the Campagna, at the end of those coiling streets. Rocca di Papa is like an eagle's nest, perched high on the mountain, with its shady square in front of the little church where you hear old women praying aloud. Marino has an air of the country, with its fierce men, its somewhat bold, handsome women, its thronging children. Ariccia hangs picturesquely against the very side of the hill, jutting out into space. Each has its variety of primitive life, of rococo architecture, of running water, of trees, of volcanic rock, of lake scenery. And for those who care greatly for the delicate shading of colours as they change over a sensitive landscape, to look from these heights is to look down, from dawn till sunset, upon a paradise of the daintiest colours in the world, in that jewelled desert which lies about Rome.

But the Campagna is most wonderful, most itself, at sunset; and sunset in Rome should be seen from the Via Appia, as I saw it during a memorable drive in mid-winter. Looking back from the mound beyond the Casal Rotondo, Rome seemed far off, dwindled by distance, all its towers and domes and roofs white, set in the hollow of the hills. Nearer to me, Frascati, a white sparkle upon the dark Alban hills: between, along the sky, the Apennines,

their snow lying caressingly against the clouds; and below, all around me, the desert of the Campagna, the long grey line of the aqueducts seeming to impress itself, with a certain insistency, upon the otherwise timeless waste of the great plain. A church bell sounded faintly, like the sound of a cow-bell, from a little white church on the Via Appia Nuova; the air was still, clear, cold, with a marvellous serenity in its soft brightness; and as I looked across the Campagna, going out desolately towards the sea, I could just distinguish a light shining along the line of dark trees at the edge of the horizon. Hearing a slow creaking of wheels, I looked down, and saw in a road two lounging oxen drawing a load of silvery ilex boughs. Two peasants went by, lounging like the oxen, in their long-haired garments of undressed skins; shepherds who had come down from the Apennines for the winter, with their flocks and herds, and had encamped upon the plain, in the little conical huts which rise out of it so strangely. Sunset was beginning, and, as we drove back along the Via Appia, the clouds which had obscured the sun cleared away, and the sky seemed to be washed with colours which were at once fiery and watery: greens of an inexpressibly luminous delicacy, paler and softer than any grass or leaf that ever grew, but with the ardour in them of growing things; pinks that were like the inner petals of rose-leaves, flushing on the horizon to a fierce golden red, which burned in the tops of the

trees like a conflagration, and at the edges floating away into paler and paler gold, and from that into the green of moonlit water, and from that into a blue which was the colour of shallow water under very faint sunlight, a blue which deepened overhead into the vast outstretched dome of the sky. The air grew chill, with that intense cold which seems to come down out of the sky upon Rome for an hour after sunset. We drove back, along the straight road, between the ruined tombs which had once stood at the gates of the villas of Romans, and which stand now, in their ruins, seeming to look as the Romans loved to look, on the road which was the world's highway; that long road leading into the Eternal City (upon which, indeed, the ends of the earth are still visibly come) out of the vague world. In so beautiful a desolation, at which the soul shivers away into that loneliness which is the soul's ecstasy before eternal things, I said to myself that here, if anywhere upon earth, God and man had worked together to show at one glimpse all the glory of the world.

VI

Perhaps my most agreeable recollection of a winter spent in Rome is the recollection of innumerable drives with a friend in the Roman Campagna and about the Castelli Romani. The Comte de B., after a lifetime of disinterested travelling,

in which he trained his eyes to a perfect susceptibility, and his judgment to a perfect impartiality in the noting and comparison of so much of the world's scenery, came finally to a deliberate preference of this scenery about Rome as the most beautiful in the world, a deliberate choice of it as the scenery most appropriate, at all events, to the demands of his own temperament, the requirements of his own meditations. And it is through his eyes, certainly, that I first learned to see the Campagna, which, like all profound beauty, does not reveal itself to all, with the insolent challenge of Alps, the feminine seductiveness of meadow-lands; and I cannot evoke for myself the spectacle of the Roman landscape without seeing in its midst so difficult, so constant, so learned a lover of it; for this strange, attractive figure, the traveller, the student of race, the student of history, with his courtly violence, his resolute pieties, his humorous prejudices softening the rigour of a singular spiritual equanimity, his reticent, self-absorbed, and yet gracious and affectionate temperament, seemed to me, in his lifetime, himself an inevitable figure in that landscape.

The beauty of the Campagna is a soft, gradual, changing beauty, whose extreme delicacy is made out of the action upon one another of savage and poisonous forces. The line of the Alban mountains, against the clear sky, is the most harmonious line of mountains that I have ever seen; but its pathetic

grace, in which there is almost the appeal of music, comes to it from the tumultuous caprice of volcanic fires. The great plain, which, seen from the hills, is like a gently undulating sea, covered with soft and variable tints as the sunlight wanders across it, is a desert of lava, barren soil, and lank herbage, discoloured grass and the far from "tufted" asphodel. The malaria which always lurks there has thinned and withered and bent the few shepherds and herdsmen who are its only inhabitants. Its silence is the silence of desolation. It is ridged with broken aqueducts, strewn with the fragments of the tombs and villas of Romans. Before Rome was, it was Latium, the birthplace of the Latin people. It hides under it the Catacombs of the Christians. All the changes of the earth and of the world have passed over it, ruining it with elaborate cruelty; and they have only added subtlety to its natural beauty, and memories to that beauty of association which is a part of the spirit of places.

But the charm of the Campagna depends also, more than most landscapes, on weather, on the hour at which one sees it; and it has different aspects, seems to reveal to one a different secret, as one approaches it from this gate or that. Our drive was usually timed to end with sunset, and sunset is the most surprising and illusive hour at which to see the Campagna. I remember the first sunset I ever saw there. We had driven around the deserted outer side of the Aurelian Wall, between

the *canne*, rustling loudly, rattling against one another, in the rising *tramontana*, and the tall brown wall, in which the stones are of every age and recall every ruler of Rome. The air was cold and bright, and as we came near the Porta San Paolo sunset was beginning to streak a pale sky with faint bands of rose and green, against which I saw the cypresses of Shelley's graveyard and the Pyramid of Cestius. The sky flushed, moment by moment, with brighter and brighter, yet always delicate, colour, a faint rose which reddened to fire, splashing with sidelong jets of flame the pallid green which brightened miraculously to a watery colour as green as grass, yet as luminous as moonlight. Green melted into gold, red into the faintest of rose, as if an inner heat burned them, and every colour was reflected in diminishing shades, above and below, upon the sky itself. And this light in the sky seemed to reflect itself, as in a mirror, all over the Campagna, which changed sensitively as every colour changed in the sky. In a time of scirocco, when I have seen the vapour rolling in from the hills, the whole plain has seemed to wither into an ashen greyness; at noon, under steady sunlight, it has shimmered with gold; at night, when I have climbed a high wooded bank which lies outside the Porta del Popolo, I have seen it lying under its network of silver mist, the Tiber hurrying through it, curved like a crescent. And always, closing in the plain as with a magic circle, there has been

the soft line of the Alban hills, the sharper indentations of the Sabine hills, and beyond, the snow upon the Apennines.

The beauty of the little hill-towns which rise out of the Campagna, like rocks rising out of the sea, has really the character of a kind of inland sea-coast, in which the houses themselves take a precipitous and rocky air, clinging, as they do at Ariccia, to a scant foothold over a gulf, or, at Rocca di Papa, to the bare side of the mountain; and they have, along with this shy and withdrawn savagery of aspect, to which the quite recent legends of brigandage add a certain confirmation, something almost artificial in their exquisite poise, their spectacular appropriateness of detail, the happy accidents of their grouping and the rococo adornment of their villas, built for Popes and princes. It is by their artificiality that they seem to attach themselves to Rome, by that side of them which is delicate and ornate; their ruggedness, the freshness of their mountain air, the colour in the rough cheeks of their peasants, the flavour of their wine and flowers, are all their own, and have nothing in common with anything Roman. Only Tivoli seems to me in a sense Roman, one of the great things of Rome, on the same natural scale as the great buildings there; what is artificial in its waterfalls and gorges and the terraced Villa d'Este being done consummately, and with a complete harmony of adaptation.

And, like the Campagna, these *castelli* have their

secrets, which are not quite ready to reveal themselves to every comer. At Frascati, for instance, even the Villa Aldobrandini is, in a sense, one of the show-villas; that villa which, if you read closely enough in Pater's "Marius," you will find described as the house of a certain "aristocratic poet who loved every sort of superiorities," where Marius meets Apuleius. "Whereupon," we are told, "the numerous cascades of the precipitous garden of the villa, framed in the doorway of the hall, fell into a harmless picture, in its place among the pictures within, and hardly more real than they." Yet, even there I do not find the intimacy, the penetrating strangeness, of the neglected gardens of the Villa Falconieri, higher up on the other side of the climbing roadway, entered by a gate flowered through by the whole body of an immense, twisted, very ancient tree, which has been allowed so fantastic a whim of growth. There is a little lake on a plateau at the highest point of those gardens, which I shall remember even if I forget Lake Nemi itself, and that "mirror of Diana" is the most purely beautiful lake I have ever seen. This space of dark water is closed in on three sides by tall, motionless cypresses, their solemn green, menacing enough in itself, reflected like great cubes of blackness, pointing downwards at the sky. The waters are always dark, even in full sunlight; they have always that weight upon them of the funereal trees which stand between them and the sun; and through the cy-

presses you can see Rome, far away, beyond the gardens, the stacked vines, the olive-trees, and the indefinite wilderness, set there like a heap of white stones. I scarcely know what it is that this unaccountable scene awaits; but it seems to wait. Disillusioned lovers might walk there, chill even on a day of sun, seeing their past perhaps in that distant glimpse of Rome, their future in those cypress-shadowed depths, and their present in the narrow strip of brown earth between those two infinitudes.

Scenery so liberal as this scenery of the Roman Campagna lends itself, on their own terms, to many minds. By whatever side human things and the history of the world interest you, on that side chiefly will you feel the attraction of the Campagna. To the friend in whose company I frequented it it was a mirror of very definite thoughts, memories, speculations, with which the history and religion of Rome had to do. Here, he would remind me, at that bend of the Tiber, Cleopatra's barge passed, rowing hard for Egypt; there, at the cross-roads on the Via Appia, Christ appeared to St. Peter, where the little church still asks the question, "Domine, quo vadis?" Here, on the Via Ostense, a small chapel marks the spot where St. Peter and St. Paul took leave of one another before each went to his martyrdom; farther on, at the Tre Fontane, where the Trappists' friends, the birds, sing among avenues of eucalyptus, St. Paul was beheaded. To my

friend every stone had its precise memory, its legend or record. And that, certainly, is the most fruitful way of seeing the Campagna, though, indeed, one ignorant or heedless of these things might still come to prefer this to all other scenery for its own sake, for its mere natural sensitiveness to one's moods and the sunlight.

VII

We love cities for their gracious weather, as we love persons for their amiable dispositions; and Rome, even in winter, shows frequently a marvellous equanimity of temper. I have had, in December and January, weeks of uninterrupted sunshine, in which every day's promenade ended naturally, as it should, with sunset. And that perilous shiver of cold which comes over city and Campagna in the hour after sunset gives just that astringent touch which is needed for the completion of all merely pleasant beauty. But happiness in Rome, certainly, comes and goes with the wind and the sunshine. Withdraw the sun, and Rome is like a face from which the smile has faded; change the wind, and one's own disposition changes with it. Driving one day in the Campagna, outside the Porta Furba, I *saw* the scirocco. The hills above Frascati were a little dimmed with clouds; gradually a vast, white, rolling mist came violently up out of the sky beyond the hills; soft, stealthy, pendulous, undulating, irre-

sistible, it came coiling rapidly onward, as if a poisonous life had taken shape and came serpentlike upon Rome. Under a chill rain these narrow streets, with their wrinkled stones in which the rain gathers, become desolate in an instant; and indoors, in these houses without fires, without chimneys, life becomes intolerable. Living, as one is apt to do here, on one's sensations, how can any happiness be possible in the absence of just what makes the happiness of the sensations: gracious weather, the mere liberty to feel without discomfort? By one's fireside in London a storm of winter rain matters little enough. But what does everything else in the world matter here in a downpour of rain in winter?

And these people, one feels, are made for happiness, for the easy acceptance of things as they come. There is a terrible poverty in Rome, of which the beggars who await you at every street corner are but too genuine a sign. The first gesture learnt by the children of poor people in Rome is to hold out their hands for alms; they begin when they are so young that they can only totter, and they are still holding out their hands for alms when they can only totter because they are so old. Yet another sign of it I find in the 3000 cabmen of Rome, sitting hungrily on their boxes, in their worm-eaten fur coats, too lazy to do anything but sit there holding out their whips to solicit every passer, and unable to make a decent living even in a place so frequented by strangers and a place where every one drives.

But even here, in these beggars and cabmen, is there not a certain participation, at all events, in that open-air life which is the felicity of Rome? "Abbiamo pazienza," say the poor people, and sit in the sun.

To poor and rich alike, the whole of every part of the open air of Rome is a personal property. People stand in the streets as if in their own drawing-rooms; and in the Corso, especially at that hour of the afternoon when the thickest flow of carriages has passed, they stretch from side to side, forming into groups outside the Caffè Aragno and on both sides of the Piazza Colonna. But, if they can, they drive: Italians hate walking. This gives them a respect for anything on wheels, so that Rome is represented by its carriages, as Venice is represented by its gondolas. They have even saintly warrant for it; for San Filippo Neri, one of their patron saints, and himself a typical Roman, set it down among his instructions to the faithful that, as a concession to the weakness of the flesh, it was permitted to keep a carriage. And the Romans have taken him so precisely at his word that they will live on macaroni and five soldi's worth of wine in order to keep a *carrozza*. Cardinals, again, are not allowed to walk in the streets; they must drive in a closed carriage. So it is that Rome, more than any other city in which driving is a luxury rather than a necessity, is the city where one drives. The constant passing of carriages, in streets where two can scarcely pass abreast and where there is no foot-

path, procures one, indeed, one of the few disagreeable sensations of Rome: the sensation, whenever one walks, of a wheel about to descend on one's heel.

In the long, narrow, thronged Corso the press of carriages, as they go to and return from the Pincio, is so great that walking becomes difficult. But, all the same, I find that conventional drive along the Corso, through the Piazza del Popolo, up the winding terraces of the Pincio, the equivalent (and how much more than the equivalent!) of Hyde Park or the Bois de Boulogne, one of the most tolerable of all conventional drives. What I find specially charming is its universality, its equality. You will see the queen in her carriage with the red livery; the nobility, the rich bourgeois, the shopkeepers, all with their families; nurse-maids, women without hats, young clerks and young princes, passing and repassing, side by side, all seeming to be entirely contented with themselves, the fine air, the music, the marvellous view over Rome, in which the colours begin to group towards sunset. On those picturesque heights, high over the city; under those evergreen oaks by which the Romans delude themselves into thinking it is never winter; in sight of St. Peter's in the sky, and all Rome, its roofs and domes, below; without thought, but idly satisfied with the sunlight, with the band that plays to them their positive, unshaded, soulless Italian music, Verdi or Mascagni, they pass and repass, proud of being Romans, even

if they do not take the trouble to so much as glance at the daily miracle of Rome.

VIII

The carnival, which this year, for perhaps the first time in ten years, was really a carnival, is simply the personification of Roman idleness, and a gaiety which is a sort of tradition. I begin to see now the meaning of those idle people, dinnerless, and with shining boots and many rings, who stand in the Corso in front of the Caffè Aragno. To wear coloured dresses, to put on masks, to run in the streets all day and to dance all night, to chatter irresponsibly, to throw jokes and confetti about the air, and to forget that one is poor, that life has its to-morrow and has had its yesterday: this is happiness to the Romans, and their abandonment to it is contagious. It is very long since anything has given me so inspiriting and reckless a sense of the joy of life as the sight of these ardent smiling faces, in which mirth is never vulgar, but as natural as speech; and I find the mask, making all men humorously akin, the only form in which the idea of democracy is not intolerable. What a coloured whirl, in which all Rome seemed to become a kaleidoscope! Everywhere a flight of white frilled things, Pierrots, Pulcinellas, darting, alighting, along a flowery way, like white birds; flowers by day and lights by night; the cars, the *moccoletti;* with, at night, the pathos of

streets strewn with flowers and confetti, the smell of trodden flowers, the feast ended. On the afternoon of Mercoledì Grasso I began to make my way along the Corso at three, and I did not reach the Piazza del Popolo until half-past four. And that difficult way along the street, its windows all aflower with faces, a soft rain of coloured paper raindrops, the sharp hail of confetti falling all the way, flowers flying above one's head, settling on one's hat, tapping against one's cheek, was a lesson in the Italian temperament, its Southern capacity for simple enjoyment, for the true folly, that abandonment to the moment's whim, in which there is none of the Northern brutality. Civilisation has sunk deeper into these people, in whom civility is a tradition; it has penetrated to the roots; and in this character so positive, so unshaded, from which the energy has dwindled away, but not the simplicity, the charming and graceful naturalness, there is the same superficial, yet in its way sufficient, quality as in the fine finish of these faces, equally finished in the peasant and in the noble.

IX

Northern beauty, however fine may be the line of its contour, is never, for good or evil, a mere beauty of the body, a thing beginning with itself and ending in itself: it contains always a suggestion; it is haunted by a soul; it leaves for its completion some-

thing to the imagination. But in the beauty of Roman women there is no trace of spiritual beauty, none of the softness of charm; it is the calm, assured, unquestioning beauty of the flesh. These are faces which should be seen always in pure outline, for they are without melting curves, delicate and variable shades, or any of that suggestion which comes from anything but their own definite qualities as they are in themselves. The faces of Roman women of the upper classes are cold, hard, finished, and impenetrable as cameos. In a face which is at all beautiful you will not find a line which is not perfect, and this elegance and sureness of line goes with that complexion which is the finest of all complexions, pure ivory, and which carries with it the promise of a temperament in which there is all the subtlety of fire. The distinction between the properly aristocratic and the strictly plebeian face is, I think, less marked in Rome than in any city. Almost all Roman women have regular faces, the profile clearly cut and in a straight line; black hair, often with deep tones of blue in it, and sometimes curling crisply; dark eyes, often of a fine uniform brown, large, steady, profound, with that unmeaning profundity which means race, and which one sees in the Jewess, the gipsy. They have a truly Roman dignity, and beneath that the true fire, without which dignity is but the comely shroud of a corpse; and though there is not a trace in them of the soft, smiling, catlike air of the women of Venice, and not

much of the vivid, hardy, uncaring provocativeness of the women of Naples, they are content to let you see in them that reasonable nearness to the animal which no Italian woman is ashamed to acknowledge. They have often a certain massiveness of build which makes a child look like a young woman, and a young woman like a matron; but, for Italians, they are tall, and, though one sees none of the trim Neapolitan waists, it is but rarely that one sees, even among the market women bringing in their baskets on their heads, those square and lumpish figures which roll so comfortably through Venice.

The day on which to see the Roman populace most easily, most significantly, is the day of San Stefano, at the popular saint's church on the Cælian. The circular walls are covered with fifteenth century paintings of martyrdoms, naïve saints, bold in colour and distressing in attitude, suffering all the tortures of Pagan ingenuity. From early morning till late in the afternoon an incessant stream of people, mostly young people, out of all the alleys of Rome and from all the hills of the Campagna, surges in and out of the narrow doorway, where one is almost carried off one's feet in the difficult passage. Outside, where there are lines of booths covered with sweets and toys, fruits and cakes, the lane has the aspect of a fair. Inside, there is a service going on in the choir, but few pay much heed to it; they have come to see the show, and they make the round of all the martyrdoms.

The women, almost all bareheaded, stop at the door, in the very press of the crowd, to pull out the folded handkerchief and throw it over their heads, catching the ends between their teeth. And face after face, as I watched them pass me, was absolutely beautiful; now a Raphael Madonna, now a Roman goddess; adorable young people in whom beauty was a tradition. Some of them had complexions like wax, others were as brown as mahogany; all alike had that finished regularity of feature to which the ardency or mildness of the eyes was but one detail the more in a perfectly harmonious picture. And these beautiful creatures, at once placid and vivid, were unconscious of their beauty, with the unconsciousness of animals; and they swarmed there like animals, with a heartless and innocent delight in the brutal details of those painted scenes of torture, in which they saw their ancestors torturing their ancestors. As they nudged one another, their eyes glistening, and pointed to the saint who was being boiled in a cauldron, the saint whose flesh was being flayed off in long rolls, the female saint whose breasts were being cut off with a long knife, I seemed to see the true Roman mob as it had been of old, as it will always be. It was just such people as these, with their strong nerves, their indifference in the matter of human life, who used to fill the Colosseum, as simply as they filled the martyrs' church of San Stefano Rotondo, when the martyrs themselves were being thrown to the lions.

X

In a city laid out for the delight of the eyes it is natural that much of the most intimate charm of the city should linger in its villas and gardens, and there is nothing which gives so much the sensation of that mournful, yet not too mournful, atmosphere of partly faded splendour which is the atmosphere of Rome as the gardens of the Villa Mattei. Around are broken walls rising brown and jagged against the sky, the walls of the baths of Caracalla; a desolate strip of country on the edge of the city; and beyond, seen from the terraces lined with the dead bluish-green of cactus, the Alban hills. All the garden walks, where not even the cypresses are funereal nor the sunlight itself gay, breathe an exquisite melancholy, the most delicate and seductive breath of decay. There are wandering terraces, slim vistas, an entanglement of green and wayward life, winding in and out of brown defaced walls fringed with ivy, and about white and broken statues shining from under this green cloak of leaves; everywhere surprising turns of ways among the trees curving out here and there, as if instinctively, into a circle about a fountain, where broad leaves shadow the heads of gods or emperors in stone. And everywhere there is the cool sound of water, which rises in the fountains and drips under water-plants in a grotto; and everywhere, as one follows the winding paths, a white hand stretches out from among the darkness of ivy,

at some turn of the way, and one seems to catch the escaping flutter of white drapery among the leaves. You will sometimes see the shy figure of an old cardinal taking his walk there; and if you follow him, you will come upon a broad alley of ilexes, lined with broken statues, broken friezes, and arched over by fantastically twisted branches, brown and interlaced, on which the blue-grey leaves hang delicately like lace; an alley leading to what must once have been a sarcophagus, covered, on the side by which you approach it, with white carved figures. On the other side you find yourself in a little trellised circle, from which, as through a window suddenly opened, you see the Alban hills; there is a rustic wooden seat against the stone of the sarcophagus, on which, roughly carved, two lions meet and seem to shake hands, and above is written: "Qui San Filippo Neri discorreva coi suoi discepoli delle cose di Dio."

Just as I love the gardens of the Villa Mattei, so, for much the same reason, I love certain old churches and cloisters, which, hidden away in quiet corners, exhale, like a faint perfume, a sense of peace and of desolation in so singular a union. I am never tired of the Pace, the Church of Peace, which nestles against the Anima, the Church of the Soul, in a poor central part of the city. And it is not for the Sibyls of Raphael, admirable in grace of invention as they are, that I go to it, but partly for the frescoes of Baldassare Peruzzi, on the opposite wall, their strength, their gracious severity, their profound

purity, and partly for something in the narrow compass, the dim colours, of the church itself, which seem to make it, not in name only, the Church of Peace. And in the midst of the Trastevere, with its high mouldering walls, its desolate open spaces, its yellow tortuous alleys, and half-fallen houses laid open against the road, one comes upon certain churches each of which has its own appeal. There is San Crisogono, Madame Gervaisais' church, big, rectangular, railed off from the world, with its vast dim emptiness, very restful as I have seen it at Vespers, mostly in shadow, a broad band of light showing, at one end, the white-robed priests, the dark shawls of old women, the children running to and fro over the floor, while one hears the pathetic little organ now before and now behind the voices which sing quavering responses. There is the basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, with its precious mosaics, standing aside from the yellow emptiness of the square. There is the church which had been the house of St. Cecilia, in which you see the white plaintive marble figure of the martyr lying under the altar, in a delicate attitude, as if in sleep, with that ineffectual gash along the slim neck; the monastery with its little upper room in which St. Francis of Assisi had lived, and where the old, half-blind, simple-minded monk shows you the famous portrait and the fragments of the saint's clothing. There is the monastery of San Cosimato, now an almshouse for old people, with its adorable unknown Pinturicchio, its august carved

tombs underfoot, its mouldering cloister, in which precious marbles lie about like refuse; its ragged garden, which has grown green over one knows not what wealth of buried treasures; linen hanging to dry, old men and women moving slowly with bent backs: all this pathetic casual mingling of ruined magnificence and the decrepit old age of people living on charity, how expressive of Rome it is, and how curiously it completes one's sense of that desolation which is, as Shelley found it, "a delicate thing"!

And in all these rich churches in the midst of very poor people, all with at least their bit of precious marble, their fresco, their one fine picture, there is something which appeals to yet another sentiment; for, opening as they desire the gates of heaven to the poor, do they not certainly open the gates of that heaven on earth which is art? When I go into one of these churches and see how poor or humble or distressed people have come into them for the relief of rest, and when, as I sit there, certainly with no devout thoughts, I feel the gradual descent all around me of an atmosphere of repose, which seems to shut one off, as with invisible wings, from the agitations of the world, the busy trivialities of one's own mind, all the little, active hindrances to one's own possession of one's self, I realise how well the Catholic Church has understood the needs of that humanity to which she has set herself to minister, and how medicinal a place she must always have in

the world's course, if no longer as a tonic, still as the most soothing, the most necessary, of narcotics.

XI

There are certain hours, there is something in the aspect of certain places, churches, or gardens, in which it seems to me that Bernini has interpreted more of the soul of Rome than we are apt or anxious to suppose. All that is florid, not quite sincere, unfairly spectacular, in the aspect of the city is summed up for me in the four Doctors of the Church, in black and white marble, who lean around the chair of Peter in St. Peter's, and in the ten loose-limbed angels (done after Bernini's designs) who balance themselves against an unfelt wind on the balustrades of the Ponte Sant' Angelo. What is more subtle in this same not quite sincere aiming after effect comes out in the languid St. Sebastian, in the church of that name on the way to the Catacombs, his white marble flesh pierced by gilt arrows, lying elegantly in his violent death; about which, indeed, the modern custodians of the church have set a whole array of painted card-board dolls, a very rag-fair. But subtler still, more intimately expressive of that part of the religious sentiment which must inevitably, in so ecclesiastical a city, come to complete, on the world's side, whatever is profane, sensuous, artificial, in the idea of devotion to the immaculate Virgin, is the Santa Teresa in the Church of S. Maria della

Vittoria. The saint, who has the fine hands of a patrician lady, lies in an attitude of sharp, luxurious, almost active abandonment, the most sensual attitude I have ever seen in stone; her eyes are upturned, under their heavy lids, to where a stream of golden rays falls upon her, a new Danaë, while a young and smiling angel stands above her, about to pierce her heart with the arrow of divine love.

But if there are certain moods in which Bernini and his Rome seem to one the true Rome, there are others in which a deeper simplicity seems to indicate what is, after all, deeper in the heart of the city, as in some charming piece of unconscious poetry (superstition, if you like to call it so),such as the benediction of horses on the day of San Antonio Thaumaturgo. I love all superstitions, for I have never yet found one which did not come out of something which was once pure poetry. They are the people's heritage of poetry, and to believe them is to have, at all events, something of the mood, the mental attitude to which alone poetry can appeal. I spent some time on the steps of the Church of San Eusebio on that day of the benediction of horses, and I remember one very rough and wild-looking countryman and his son, who drove up in a little homely cart, a foal trotting by the side of the mare. The man got down and waited, looking up anxiously, his cap in his hand, until the priest came out with his card of printed Latin and his gilt sprinkler, and blessed the horses in the name of the Father and the Son and

the Holy Ghost; then the countryman put on his cap with satisfaction, got into his cart, and drove off, not knowing that he had been unconsciously living a piece of poetry.

On another day, about Christmas, I saw the Presepe in that church of the Aracœli (its altar indeed near heaven) which has throned itself higher even than the Capitol, upon which it looks down from above its ladder-like steps, on which, if you see them from below, people seem to be gliding down a celestial staircase without moving their feet as they pass from stair to stair. The lighted manger, as I entered the dim church, was shown suddenly as the sliding-doors were drawn back; and a priest, going up into the midst of the painted dolls, took the Bambino, a chubby red infant made of coarsely daubed wood, his robes all golden and bejewelled, out of his mother's arms, and carried him through the church to the vestry, where he was held in front of the altar to have his foot kissed. Women and children crowded about him, smiling and pleased, seeing what was droll, and at the same time the poetry of the symbol. There I saw another side of the religious element in Rome, the Christ of simple women, of little children, as that sprinkling of the horses had been the religion, centred in his beasts, of the peasant, and the Bernini saint, in her ecstasy of abandonment to the divine love, the patroness of Roman boudoirs.

XII

In a toy-shop in the Via Nazionale there is on one side a life-sized waxen clown dressed in red, who winks his eyes, and taps with his hand on the window; on the other side is a little waxen clown, seated, dressed in green, who holds on his lap a pig with a napkin round his neck. He holds a piece of meat in his hand, and the pig looks at it and puts out his tongue. Then the clown shrugs his shoulders, taps on the ground with one foot, and again holds out the piece of meat to the pig, who licks it with his tongue, when the clown again draws back the piece of meat, shrugs his shoulders, and taps his foot again. There never was anything more ingenious of its kind, and every one who passes the window stops in front of the two clowns and the pig. It seems to me that in this puerile mechanical ingenuity I see modern Rome as the Romans would like to make it, as they have made it whenever they have had the chance. That Rome should be a living city rather than a museum of antiquities is one of its special charms; and thus it is that Rome, in which all the ages are at home and jostle one another, is, more than any other city, a world in miniature. But Rome adapts itself less than most cities to all the unsightly economies and hurried facilities of modern progress. The Italian of to-day, the Italian in whose hands is the civic power, has resolved that his capital, which he knows to be the most historically interest-

ing capital in the world, shall compete with all the young, pushing commercial capitals on their own lines, which fortunately it can never do. He has set electric trams running past Trajan's Forum, and through narrow and crowded streets where they are an absolute danger. A little while ago he planned to surround the Forum with a gilt railing, but he had not the money to do it. He has put a hideous iron bridge across the Tiber close to the Ponte Sant' Angelo. He has built a gas-manufactory in the very midst of ancient Rome, and poisoned the air all round. He has cut down the secular cypresses of the Villa Ludovisi, and, indeed, all the trees he could lay his axe upon. But he has propped up every falling stone, and every stone is falling, of the house of the Anguillaras in the Trastevere, because Count Anguillara was the enemy of a Pope.

Modern Roman feeling, which, since the events of 1870, has been somewhat assertively patriotic, has certainly little sympathy for the Church. Has it, or has it not, left the hearts of the people, remaining but as a tradition, a bowing of the head before the passing of God, a lifting of the hat before the passing of death? Are the priests, after all, making the laws of a city which is in the hands of the enemy? At all events, the Church is still able very impressively to disregard what may be only a temporary alienation. Walking one day from the Via Sistina towards the Villa Medici, along that gracious height which overlooks all Rome, and thinking of the very

temporal grandeur of what lay there before me, I saw a young priest walking rapidly to and fro on the flat roof of a house, his eyes fixed on his breviary, never raising them to consider the splendour of the city. He seemed to me to typify the serene, unthinking, and, because immaterial, invincible power of the Church, throned there over what she does not always even trouble to understand, so certain is she that a power founded on faith is the master of material things, and must always remain, even in secret, even unacknowledged, even against men's will, their master.

XIII

Nothing in Rome is so great, nothing so admirable, as the continuity and persistence of its life; which renews itself incessantly, through change, destruction, and the "improvements" of all the ages. To-day Rome is alive, and it contains, without confusion, the still living ruins of every age known to history. No other city harmonises so easily things elsewhere incongruous, and I find to-day nothing necessarily incongruous in any part of its existence. It is still the capital of Italy, the King and the Pope live in it side by side, there are soldiers and priests, colleges and shops, and the strangers who come to it on pilgrimage find something very different from the museum of archæology and of the fine arts which they may have looked to find.

Yet, in this persistence of the national life, it is curious how much more evident are the vices than the virtues of their ancestors in, at all events, the public performances of the modern Romans. The ancient Romans were among the great builders of the world, and much of what they built still remains hardly the worse for wear after nearly two thousand years. The modern Romans still build, and would still build, if they could, in the grand manner, and with the old stability. The bridge which crosses the Tiber to the island, the Pons Fabricius or Ponte Quattro Capi, the most solid and the most elegant bridge in Rome, has its builder's name and the date of its building, B. C. 62, still legibly engraved on both sides of each arch. The Ponte Margherita, which leads from the Piazza del Popolo to the other side of the river, has already, in its fifteen years of existence, had to be repaired. Less than thirty years ago an embankment was made along both sides of the Tiber; it has turned a living river into a canal suffocated between prison walls, and the first serious flood has broken a gap in it. A vast building, which is to be the Law Courts, is rising, "a ghost in marble," to use a phrase of Coleridge, an ominous, hideous, unescapable ghost, which will blast a whole region of Rome. A monument to Vittorio Emanuele is being built with a steady waste of years and money, as yet hardly to be calculated; and this monument will buffet and overhang the sight in the very midst of the city, as the man and horse of the Garibaldi statue stamp

their pattern on the sky, like a placard hung high enough at last.

And the Romans follow their ancestors, with a like difference, in another and even worse fashion. The whole history of Rome has been a series of transpositions, from the brick which Augustus left marble, and the Haussmannisation of Nero, to the cutting of the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. In all these changes, for better or for worse, the old has been destroyed to make way for the new. During the Middle Ages, and right into the Renaissance, Pagan buildings were merely quarries for Christian churches and the palaces of nobles. Now and then the plunder was used to some purpose, and the travertine of the Colosseum helped to build the Cancellaria and the Farnese Palace. But now, when respect for ancient monuments is accepted in principle, and when the principle is put into practice by the tidying of the Forum and by the barrier of the lira which keeps the casual vagabond out of its enclosure, whatever is destroyed is destroyed deliberately, inexcusably. No excuse, but that of money-making or of the most trivial material convenience, has ever been offered for the destruction of the Villa Ludovisi, for the encroachment on the Campagna by the building of factories and of tenements, for the gas-works of the Circus Maximus, for the contemplated destruction of part of the Castel S. Angelo in order to widen a road which is already as wide as most of the streets of Rome. This is not the first time that the conven-

ience of the people has been set before the preservation of so eminently national a monument. Part of the fortifications were removed some twenty years ago; unnecessarily even then. In all these petty larcenies upon the property of the world, nothing has been gained, everything lost; for of what consequence is it to any one that two cardinals may drive abreast from the Ponte Margherita to the Vatican, or that the latest bevy of Cook's tourists may sit down to dinner on the exact spot where the gardens of Sallust had delighted the Romans for nearly the whole of the Christian Era?

The modern Roman has two passions, which we can express in English by a single word: edification. He has the mania of building vast edifices, and he has the mania of turning his building to some edifying purpose. In the monument to Vittorio Emanuele and in the Garibaldi statue both are combined; in the Law Courts, in the Gallery of Modern Art, in the Banca d'Italia, we find the passion for what is big; in the "busts of distinguished Italians" which "embellish," as Baedeker says "the various walks" of the Pincio, we find the passion for what is edifying.

Image-worship has always had its seat in Rome, and the statues to Vittorio Emanuele and to Garibaldi are the legitimate lineage of the statues which were first set up to the gods of Paganism and then to the saints of Christianity. The Roman must have something visible to worship, and it is the sculptor's art, with its noble pomp, its publicity, that has always

most pleased him. First he worshipped images of force, then images of mercy, and now he again worships images of force. He has drawn his deities nearer to him, he has chosen them out of his own streets, he has exalted them that he may exalt himself in them. The instinct is the same, only the form changes.

The Romans have still the choice of unparalleled sites, and they have lost none of their old skill in choice. From the Janiculum one sees all Rome; one sees the Janiculum from almost every quarter of Rome. Tasso's oak is there, and the garden of the eighteenth century Academy of the Arcadians, and the Villa Lante; and there, on the highest point of the hill, once wooded with old and lovely oaks, the equestrian statue of Garibaldi has been set up. The base stands a little woodenly, all four legs set square, the rider at least sits steady; but around the base are fretful groups in bronze: on two sides peaceful symbolism, and on two sides fighting men with plumes and guns and sabres and revolvers and bugles and knapsacks. By the roadside on the way down to Acqua Paola there are busts in top-hats and military caps; and these, which no one can mistake for ornament, are put there, I suppose, for purposes of edification, like the busts of distinguished Italians which embellish the various walks of the Pincio.

The great men of the Pincio range from Julius Caesar to Daniele Manin; they are put there, I suppose, in order that the Roman youth of to-day, as

he takes the air on the most delightful promenade in Europe, may think of the great men to whom his country has given birth, and that he may be stirred to emulation. Great men or mediocrities, they are represented in these shameless busts with an unvarying and irritating inanity. They cannot be ignored: the bald head and frizzled locks pose and flutter for attention; the names cry from the pedestals; one is continually distracted from what is peaceful and renewing in this high garden which looks over Rome. Is it possible, I ask myself, that the Roman youth of to-day can be so greedy of edification, so destitute of artistic sensibility, as to derive the proper improving thrill from what should do no more than shock his artistic sense?

The artistic sense: it is there that the modern Roman is lacking. What the ancient Roman did he desires to do; only the essential thing is not there, the sense of proportion, of beauty, of taste, the artistic sense.

Between the Capitol and the Piazza Venezia, partly hidden by walls and hoardings, there can be seen vast irregular substructures of stone-work already in parts lined with white marble, in the form of what seems to be a large modern house, with doors and windows; everywhere big doors leading nowhere, and narrow windows through which no one will ever look. The hinder part of the structure is as yet left plain, but the front and sides are clamped and embossed with irrelevant and mediocre decoration. At

each corner there is stuck a composite blob of ornament in which a garland of palm-leaves seems to support a cluster of Roman breastplates, shields, and helmets. Other blobs, with discs containing winged heads, are slung to the flat part of the wall by marble ribbons; here and there are brocades of scroll-work and foliage, and the cornices of the windows are teased into flowery patterns. Fluted columns with ornamentations of palm-leaves springing from the bases support I know not what, and a few trivial nude figures are carved on flat pillars dividing the windows.

This house, as it seems, this immense and mean house, is no more than the base for the gigantic monument to Vittorio Emanuele, which has got no further after twenty years' labour upon it. There is to be an equestrian statue on the summit, when all is done, and some two millions of pounds have been spent; but no one knows much about the statue, for the sculptor who was to have done it is dead, and the statue is still to make. In preparing the ground for the monument some mischief has already been done, but the most serious part of the mischief is only as yet decided on. One corner of the Piazza Venezia is made by the angle of the Palazzo Venezia and of what is known as the Palazzetto, a smaller and lower but not less beautiful wing of this palace, and this palace is the only example of the finer early Renaissance which exists in Rome. The Palazzetto is to be pulled down, and it is to be pulled down not even

because the space of ground occupied is wanted for part of the structure of this monument, but in order that the monument may be properly seen from the other end of the Corso. Protests have been raised in Rome, even by the Romans, against this wanton and ridiculous act of vandalism; but it appears that the protests are to be disregarded, and that a beautiful building of the fifteenth century is to be pulled down to make a peep-hole for one of the earliest abortions of the twentieth century.

For this monument which comes shouldering into Rome like a hulking parvenu, there can be no excuse of need, or even of utility, nor indeed any excuse for intruding upon the society of his betters. Here is a poor country, with still untold treasures buried where every spade may reach them, and there is not money enough to keep the spades digging. And here are millions being poured out and heaped up for the building of a monument which is neither a palace nor a church nor a museum nor a theatre, nor anything capable of human or divine uses; not even, as the Pyramids were, a tomb. The Law Courts, which are being built on the other side of the river, can scarcely bear the reproach of being useless. What building in a city can be more important than a building in which the law is administered? Thirty millions of francs is a large price to pay for utility and impressiveness, but let us see if the second result, as well as the first, is answered.

Imagine a long and low building with a flat roof,

and on the flat roof a village of small houses. The doorway and the centre of the front are still covered with scaffolding, and not wholly to be made out, though it seems that the main part of the ornamentation is to be reserved for them. But, looking over the rest of the building, one observes ornamentation everywhere and nowhere good ornamentation. There are pillars bandaged and bolstered, supporting cornices of many styles, culminating in a drove of tightly-packed bulls' heads, linked by garlands; everywhere garlands, fat garlands tied by ribbons, and above them, hanging by ribbons from imitation nails, medallions with foolish historic heads. Everywhere there are angles, knobs, twiddles of stone; not an arch is allowed to curve freely, not a pillar to spring straight from its base, not a window ledge to remain plain. And, in front of this tortured and trivial and formidable edifice, as if in silent and unregarded criticism of what is pretentious and ineffectual in it, a slender framework of black and ribbed scaffolding makes a stately and dignified pattern.

I wish to guard myself from even a momentary injustice, and it would be unjust to say that the Romans have not done skilfully what they have chosen, and perhaps, in a sense, been obliged to do, in the engineering of the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and of the tunnel of the Via Milano, and that they have not built at least one considerable building with an unusual sense of symmetry and even of restraint. Every piece of ornamentation on the Banca d'Italia

is bad, but, in proportion to its size, how remarkably little ornamentation there is! The Art Gallery in the same street, with its vaults and pillars, its friezes, its gentlemen posed against the sky in all the discomfort of stone, is there, not far off, rhetorical and complacent; and is but one more instance of that lack in Rome of the artistic sense, of the mere element of taste, which we see more fundamentally in the setting of the boxers of Canova among the antique sculpture of the Vatican, and in the careful preservation in the Palace of the Conservatori of the sixteenth-century infants, who bring so sharp a discord into the severe and admirable harmony of the Capitoline wolf of the fifth century before Christ.

It is, I have already said, the great charm of Rome that it should be still alive and still at the head of a nation. I am prepared to admit the necessity of main thoroughfares, the perhaps pardonable convenience of electric trams, and it is clear that as the population increases some sort of housing must be devised for this increase; cheap flats must, no doubt, be built for poor people; but why need these hideous buildings be put up precisely where there is most to spoil in the natural aspect of things? Only a little while ago the country around the Piazza of S. Giovanni in Laterano and the country around the Porta S. Lorenzo were masterpieces of nature and of that art which comes with age and ruin. To-day both are disfigured by mean and cheap buildings, already squalid, and the incomparable Campagna is driven

yet further from the gates. The beauty of Rome, let it never be forgotten, dwindles by every step that the Campagna withdraws from it; and, for Rome, beauty is force, existence itself. So far, during so many centuries Rome has always, by a natural magic in its hills, its air, its sky, triumphed over every outrage of its enemies or of its citizens. Will it always continue to do so? is the question which one asks oneself, not too hopefully. It has had to fight against many barbarians, but never against so formidable a barbarism as the great modern barbarism, part vulgarity, part pretentiousness, part incompetence, which calls itself progress.

XIV

What is subtlest in Rome must always reveal itself to strangers, and not to the Romans; for the modern Roman is given over to the desire and admiration of material things, and what is subtlest in Rome appeals to the soul, perhaps I should say, rather, to the mind. Since I lived in Rome I have come to find both London and Paris, in themselves, a little provincial: for I find them occupied with less eternal things, or with less of the immediate message of eternal things speaking in them, than this liberating Rome. Rome, properly apprehended (and to apprehend it properly it needs only that you are not without a certain intelligence, and that you remain passive to your impressions), seems to shut

one in, as with its own walls, upon the greatest moments that have been in the world; upon the greatest moments of art, of history, of religion, of humanity. It is not merely that they are there; you cannot escape them. Every road does not lead to Rome, but every road in Rome leads to eternity. It is quietly prodigal of itself, like the air about one which is part of one's breath. In this large Rome one has room for one's self; within these walls one is shut in from others, and from what in oneself is the reflection of their image; one's energies are not torn into little ineffectual pieces, as they are in the rapid drawing this way and that of the daily life of all other great cities. One has time to discover that, while there are many interesting and even intoxicating things in the world, there are very few things of primary importance. It is like the opening of a great door. This opening of a door, in front of which one has passed constantly without even seeing that it was shut, is the moment for which every other moment in life was but an unconscious waiting; every moment which follows will remember it. For the most part this door is but opened and then shut suddenly, before our eyes have become well accustomed to the unfamiliar light in which we discern, it may be, familiar objects. It is not often that the door is held steadily open as long as we choose to look through it. But that is what happens in Rome.

In London I am too close to a multitude of in-

teresting trifles, of attractive people, of opportunities for the satisfaction of every desire. To will and to receive are, in London, simultaneous. Daily life is too importunate in thrusting upon me whatever for an idle or perverse or estimable moment I have hankered after. There are too many people, too many books, too many museums, too many theatres; the spectacle of this feverish, unslackening life is too absorbing. I cannot escape the newspapers; for even if I do not read them, there is always some one to tell me what they have been saying of my own or my friend's last book. I cannot help sometimes asking myself what will be the immediate, urban effect of something which I have written; and it is a little humiliating to find oneself in so trivial a mental attitude, which it would be difficult to preserve in front of the Pantheon or of the Colosseum. And, above all, I have not time to live. Life scatters into waves all over the rocks, falling back broken and dispersed into the seething trouble of the ocean. Yesterday is to-day, and to-day to-morrow, before I have been alone with myself for an hour. That canopy of smoke which London has set up between itself and the sky imprisons me, day by day, with the débris of each day. I forget that anything else exists.

In Paris, frankly, I am too much at home, too happy; I require too little; life is too easy, and answers too readily to the demands of the senses. And Paris, which frees me from one conventionality,

imposes upon me another. Because the flesh is an honourable part of the human constitution, and liberty an honourable prerogative of the citizen, it does not follow that a permissible exemption should become a precept, a very prejudice. And that is just the provinciality of that bright, youthful, inspiriting, and seductive Paris which I love so much and in which I find it, after all, more nearly possible to be myself than in London; for Paris is not merely the city of the senses, but the city of ideas, the ideas of pure reason.

But Rome has freed me from both these tyrannies, the tyranny of the senses and of the ideas of pure reason. It neither absorbs me too much in material things nor forces me into too rapid mental conclusions. So much of the world's history lies about here, in these stones, like a part of nature, and with so far more significant a meaning than in the mere picturesque heaping of natural forces. Empires have lived and died here; the great spiritual empire of the Western world still has its seat upon the seven hills; here are all the kingdoms of art; and is it possible to find anywhere a more intimate message than in these voices, in this eloquent Roman silence?

WINTER, 1896, 1904.

VENICE

VENICE

I

Coming in the train from Milan, we seemed, for the last ten minutes, to be rushing straight into the sea. On each side was water, nothing but water, stretching out vaguely under the pale evening light; and at first there was not a sign of land ahead. Then a wavering line, with dark ships, and thin shafts of rigging, came out against the horizon, like the first glimpse of an island; the line broadened, lights began to leap, one after another, out of the darkness, and a great warehouse, glowing like a furnace, grew up solidly out of the water. We were in Venice.

I had never been in Venice before, and in the excitement of the moment I resolved that I would find my way to St. Mark's on foot, through the labyrinth of streets and bridges, in which I did not even know whether to turn to the right or to the left, for I had lost my guide-book in changing trains at Bâle. It seemed to me amusing to trust myself to the attraction of the centre, and I set out confidently, following as far as I could the main

stream of people. I walked fast, plunging deeper and deeper into unknown ways, which were like nothing I had ever seen, turning now to right, now to left, crossing the bridges, with their long, low comfortable steps, seeing the black flash of a gondola round a sudden corner, under me, and down the vanishing waterway between tall houses with carved balconies and stone steps rising out of the water; turning down narrow alleys, where two people could only just walk abreast, alleys which broadened all at once into great empty squares, a rococo church in one corner, a fifteenth-century palace in another; then a wider alley, in which bright crowds were buying and selling out of brilliantly coloured shops, women in vivid shawls, walking superbly, men in beautiful rags lounging against the wall and lying in doorways; then another grey square, a glimpse, in the opening between two houses, of gondolas lying in the water, between the tall stakes of a ferry; and then again the narrow and dim alleys. I went on and on, turning back, trying another alley, and still the endless alleys seemed to reach out before me, and the bright crowds grew thinner and thinner: endless! and was I really going farther and farther away? I began to wonder, and I turned back, half way up a narrow street, and asked the way to the Piazza. Straight on, they told me, up that very street, a few steps; and all at once, going a few steps beyond the point at which I had turned back, I found

myself suddenly free of all that coil of entangling alleys, which had seemed to be tightening about me like a snake; I came out into a great space, seeing for the first time a clear breadth of sky, and there, against the sky, was St Mark's.

I was glad to see Venice for the first time by night, and to come into it in just this casual fashion. A place has almost the shyness of a person, with strangers; and its secret is not to be surprised by a too direct interrogation. A guide-book is a necessary evil; but it is not when I have had a guide-book in my hand that I have received my lasting impressions. I have spent weeks in the churches of Venice, climbing upon ladders and propping myself against altars, and lying on my back on benches, to look at pictures; and I have learnt many things about Tintoretto, and Bellini, and Carpaccio, and Tiepolo, which I could have learnt in no other way. But what I have learnt about Venice, Venice as a person, has come to me more or less unconsciously, from living on the Zattere, where I could see the masts of ships and the black hulls of barges, whenever I looked out of my windows on the canal of the Giudecca; from sitting night after night outside a café in the Piazza, listening to the military band, watching people pass, thinking of nothing, only singularly content to be there; from strolling night after night down to the promontory of the Dogana, and looking into the darkness of the water, watching a man

catching fish in a net like a shrimping net, while the sound of the mandolins and of the voices of singers who sat in lantern-lighted gondolas outside the windows of the hotels on the Grand Canal came to me in a double chorus, crossing one another in a strange, not inharmonious confusion of tunes; and especially from the Lido, that long, narrow bank between the lagoon and the Adriatic, to whose seaward side I went so often, merely to be there, on the sand beyond the bathing-huts, watching the quietude of the sea. On the horizon there would be a long, tall line of fishing-boats, their red sails flashing against the pearl grey of the sky like the painted wings of great moths, spread for flight; as you gazed at them, they seemed to stand there motionless; then, as you looked away for a moment and looked back again, one of them would have vanished suddenly, as if it had gone down into the sea. And the water, which rippled so gently against the sand at my feet, had something of the gentleness of colour of that water which wanders about the shores of Ireland. It shone, and seemed to grow whiter and whiter, as it stretched out towards the horizon, where the fishing-boats stood up in their long, tall line against the sky; it had the delicacy, the quietude of the lagoon, with, in those bright sails, the beckoning of a possible escape from the monotony of too exquisite things.

II

Venice has been sentimentalised by the German and by the young lady of all nations. Lovers have found its moonlight and its water more expressive than the moonlight and the water of any other shore. Byron, Musset, Wagner, Browning, have lived and died there. It has been painted by every painter. It has become a phrase, almost as meaningless as Arcadia. And indeed it is difficult to think of Venice as being quite a real place, its streets of water as being exactly real streets, its gondolas as being no more than the equivalent of hansoms, its union of those elsewhere opposed sentiments of the sea, the canal, the island, walled and towered land, as being quite in the natural order of things. I had had my dreams of Venice, but nothing I had dreamed was quite as impossible as what I found. That first night, as I looked at the miraculous, many-coloured façade of St. Mark's, the pale, faintly-tinged marble of the Doge's Palace, I seemed, after all, not to have left London, but to be still at the Alhambra, watching a marvellous ballet, and, as it pleases me to be, in the very midst of it, among the glittering "properties," knocking at every step against some fragment of delicately unreal scenery, losing none of the illusion by being so close to its framework. The Doge's Palace looked exactly like beautifully painted canvas, as if it were stretched on frames, and ready to be shunted into the wings for a fresh "set" to

come forward. Yes, it is difficult to believe in Venice most of all when one is in Venice.

I do not understand why any one paints Venice, and yet every one who paints, paints Venice. But to do so is to forget that it is itself a picture, a finished, conscious work of art. You cannot improve the picture as it is, you can add nothing, you need arrange nothing. Everything has been done, awaits you, enchants you, paralyses you; the artistic effect of things as they are is already complete: it leaves, or should leave you, if you have artistic intentions upon it, helpless. Mere existence, at Venice, becomes at once romantic and spectacular: it is like living in a room without a blind, in the full sunlight. A realist, in Venice, would become a romantic, by mere faithfulness to what he saw before him. People are always saying in Venice, "What a picture that would make!" but the things of which people say that are just the things in which nature, time, art, and chance have already made pictures, have already done all that the artist should be left to do for himself: they remain for the photographer. The only chance, it seems to me, for the artist in Venice is to realise frankly that, in this water which seems to exist in order that it may set off the delicacy and slimness and fine decoration of architecture which on land would appear to have lost the key of its harmony, in this architecture which seems to have grown up out of the water in order that it may be a flower on the surface of the

water, he is painting the scenery of a masque or ballet.

And yet, after all, but perhaps it will only deepen your impression of that unreality which is Venice, the masque or ballet, you will soon find, is over. The scenery is still there, the lights have been left on; only the actors, the dancers, are gone. That is one element of the melancholy which is an element in the charm of Venice; but a certain sadness is inherent in the very sound and colour of still water, and a little of the melancholy which we now feel must always have been a background of shadow, even at the most splendid moment of the masque. Now, when art and commerce, the Doges and the galleys, have alike drifted into the past; when the great squares are too large for the largest crowds that are ever to be found in them, and the great palaces, too large for their owners, are passing into the hands of Jews and Americans; when the tracery of Renaissance windows looks out between broken glass and roughly fixed boards, and the balustrades of balconies moulder and wear away under the dripping of clothes hung over them to dry; when this city of carnivals and masked balls, Goldoni's, Longhi's, is asleep by midnight, it may well seem as if silence and desolation have descended on it like a cloud. Why is it then that the melancholy of Venice is the most exquisite melancholy in the world? It is because that melancholy is no nearer to one's heart than the melancholy in the face of a

portrait. It is the tender and gracious sadness of that beautiful woman who leans her face upon her hands in a famous picture in the Accademia. The feast is over, the wine still flushes the glass on the table, the little negro strikes his lute, she listens to the song, her husband sits beside her, proudly: something not in the world, a vague thought, a memory, a forgetfulness, has possessed her for the moment, setting those pensive lines about her lips, which have just smiled, and which will smile again when she has lifted her eyelids.

III

All Venice is a piece of superb, barbaric patchwork in which the East and the West have an equal share. The lion of St. Mark's, his head and shoulders in one piece, his hind-quarters in another, is a symbol of the construction of Venice, just as the bronze horses, which have seen the downfall of Nero, the splendours of Constantinople, and, at Paris, the First Empire, are a symbol of its history. Venice is as near to the East as it is to Italy; you are reminded of the East at every step; yet, after all, its interest is precisely that it is not Eastern, that it is really of the West, and that it has given a new touch of the fantastic to the fantasy which we call Oriental, an arrangement of lines and colours which, in its own country, has a certain air of being at home, but which, out of its country, frankly admits itself barbaric, a bastard.

In the thirteenth century there was a law which obliged every Venetian merchant, coming back from a voyage, to bring with him something for the adornment of the basilica. Thus it is that St. Mark's has come to be one vast mosaic, in which every piece of marble is itself a precious thing, perhaps brought from the other end of the world, and a kind of votive offering. The church is like an immense jewel, a piece of goldsmith's work, in which the exquisite and the fantastic are carried to so rare a beauty, in their elaborate mingling, as to attain almost to a perfection in spite of themselves. Unlike other great churches, the beauty of St. Mark's is not so much structural as in ornament, ornament which seems, indeed, to become a part of its very substance. It is not for its proportions, for the actual science in stone of a Palladio or a Sansovino, that it comes to be, in a sense, the most beautiful church in the world, but because it has the changing colours of an opal, and the soft outlines of a living thing. It takes the reflection of every cloud, and, in certain lights, flushes into a rose, whitens to a lily. You enter, and your feet are upon a pavement which stretches away in coloured waves like a sea; over your head is a sky of pure gold, a jewelled sky, in which the colours and the patterns are the history of the whole world. The gold, when the light strikes it, glitters in one part like rock-crystal, in another like gilt chain armour. Rosy lights play upon it, and the very vault dies away in soft fire.

Yet St. Mark's has nothing of the spiritual mysticism of a Gothic cathedral, any more than it has the purely ecclesiastical atmosphere of St. Peter's. It is half temple, half mosque; it has the severity of an early Christian church, overlaid by the barbaric splendours of the East; and its splendours, too, are hieratic, in a strange and fantastic hierarchy which seems to partake of all the religions, the beginnings of Christianity seem visibly building themselves up out of the ruins of Paganism; and the rites of the Greek Church or of the Catholic would be equally in place. It is a church which is also the world, a little world into which everything enters; where everything that has human beauty, or curiosity, or value, is not too beautiful or valuable, and could in no way be unsuited, for the divine use. And St. Mark's has room, still, for all the world and all the churches. Tourists walk about carrying red guide-books, and listening to the chatter of guides; old people, with handkerchiefs over their heads, twisted like turbans, kneel with clasped hands and unconscious eyes; the High Mass goes on in the choir, invisibly, behind the great barrier, through which there comes the sound of voices chanting; and, in a side chapel, an old priest says his Mass to a few devout persons. And nothing seems out of place, the devout persons, the priests, the tourists, the largest onyx in the world, over the pulpit, the profane sumptuousness of African marble, the "majestical roof fretted with golden fire"; for here, as every-

where in Venice, all contradictions seem able to exist side by side, in some fantastic, not quite explicable, unity of their own.

IV

High Mass at St Mark's, as I have seen it at Easter and at the feast of St Mark, is somewhat less magnificent a ceremony than in most churches; for the elevation and seclusion of the choir permit the sight of the holy mysteries only to the few who can find room inside the screen, or in one of the side chapels, or in the galleries. The galleries, indeed, give much the best point of view. Looking down from that height, you see the priests move through their appointed courses, the vestments, the incense mounting on the wings of the music, among the voices; and the great crowd crawling over the pavement, with a continual motion, from the church to the Piazza, from the Piazza to the church, settling down, now and again, into solid groups, like the pigeons outside. And indeed the aspect of the church is very similar to the aspect of the Piazza. It has the same air of space and leisure; it can be thronged, yet never appears to be full, and it has the same air of belonging to the people. On a festa everybody comes in, as naturally as everybody walks up and down the Piazza; there is the same bright crowd, face for face, shawl for shawl. It is not an instinct of devotion; it is habit, and the attraction

of the centre. In Venice all roads lead to the Piazza, and the Piazza is but the courtyard of St. Mark's.

The Piazza di San Marco always gives one an impression of space; yet, put into Trafalgar Square, how much room it would leave over! The buildings on three sides of it, though of different dates, and of very different interest as architecture (part of the south side being the Library of Sansovino, the finest public building in Italy), are all perfectly regular, and, at a general view, uniform; yet there is no sense of monotony, but rather of a distinguished precision, which, in its rich severity, is somehow more various than variety itself. And the Piazza, with its arcade of shops and cafés, though it is in one sense the Rue de Rivoli of Venice, the resort of every foreigner, is still, as it always has been, the resort of the people, and of all the people. The Englishman or the German, though he takes his ice at Florian's, or his coffee at the Quadri, like a native, is, after all, only an outside spectator of the really Venetian way of taking one's leisure. The first time I came into the Piazza, on an afternoon when the band was playing, I saw what seemed to me either a wedding or a funeral. A procession was slowly making its way along, a procession which seemed interminable; and, on coming nearer, I found that in effect it never ended, for the line returned upon itself like the winding line of a farandole, and while those nearer to the Procuratie Vecchie were always coming from the direction of St. Mark's, those

farther out were always going towards it. The order was rarely broken, and the incredible slowness of the step was never quickened. It was the public promenade, in which only the costumes have changed century after century; not the faces, nor the step, nor the drawling line returning upon itself, in which all Venice, shawled, bare-headed, bourgeois, aristocratic, and the carabinieri, imposing, ornamental creatures who seem for once in their place, in such a procession, take the air together. Another leisurable crowd darkens the *terrasse* of the cafés, spreading far out into the Piazza from under the arcades; and around the bandstand in the middle there is yet another crowd, standing attentively, while the band plays the eternal Verdi, the eternal Ponchielli; and about them, wings wide in the sunlight, the pigeons come swooping down, each with his little pink feet poised delicately close together, separating just as they touch the ground. At night the same promenade goes on: but the pigeons are sleeping, among the carved angels and beside the bronze horses of the basilica. Under the gaslight and the clear, dark blue of a sky which seems stretched like the silk of a velarium, the winding line is denser than ever. Little groups are clustered in every corner, on every step, on the pedestals of the flagstaves, on the marble slabs of St. Mark's, between the porphyry columns, on the marble bench in front of the Loggetta. At ten the crowd begins to melt away; by eleven, only Florian's and the Quadri have still

their gay, chattering disputants, little set by little set, each in its own room, or on the chairs outside it. But there are still lingerers about the flagstaves, before the Loggetta, and in the doorways and arches of St. Mark's; bare-headed women and children, half asleep, their bright shawls drawn around them, lounging so beautifully, in such coloured outline, and with such a visible sense of repose.

V

The main thoroughfare of Venice, the street of shops, which leads from the Piazza everywhere, is the Merceria, which you enter under the clock-tower, on which the two bronze gentlemen strike the hour with their hammers. After many windings it broadens out, just before reaching the Rialto, into the Campo San Salvatore, and from that onwards to the Campo San Bartolommeo. From Good Friday to Easter Monday there is a sort of little fair here, and stalls are set up under the church of San Salvatore, and all around the little railing within which stands Goldoni's statue. He stands there, looking down on the people as if he saw in them one of his comedies; firmly planted, wearing his court dress with an air, and with an intensely self-satisfied smile of amused interest on his face. If he could only turn his head, he would look right up the steep, broad stairs of the Rialto, which lie there to the right, bright with moving crowds

of colour, winding up and down on each side of the central line of stalls, between the shops, hung with long coloured stripes. He stands there, looking down on the people. All around are tall grey houses, with shutters of green and pale blue; one house, in a corner, has shutters of an intense blue, which seems to soak up and cast back all the sunlight. The stalls are but a few boards, hastily set up on trestles; they are hung with bright rows of stockings, necklaces, toys, heaped with sweets, and shirts, and shawls; some of them are old book-stalls, piled with worthless books in all languages, mostly in calf, together with numerous little works of gallantry and devotion, all in paper; there is a *Fonografico Excelsior*, and there are glittering copper things, pots and pans, lying all over the ground; and there is a pentagonal kiosque of unpainted wood, with little flags flying and paper placards stuck across it, at which two women in striped blouses, aided by a man, are serving out endless tiny cups of coffee, at a halfpenny a cup. The cry of "Acqua!" is heard at every moment, and the water-carriers pass, with their framework of glasses and their covered copper pans of water. The men, who stand or sit by the stalls, are all smoking. Sometimes they take the cigar from their mouths to shout their wares, but for the most part they seem indifferent to purchasers; especially one old and dirty Jew, with long hair and a long beard, who puffs placidly at his pipe as he watches the stall of cheap kerchiefs to which

no customer ever comes. I noticed particularly a group of five old women, with turbaned heads and a century of wrinkles, and another group of eleven *facchini* and beggars, some of whom were very old men, with tattered, yet still dignified cloaks, huge brigandish hats, their bright red stockings showing like an ornament through the gaps in their boots. They were terribly dirty; but in Venice, where everything has its own way of becoming beautiful, dirt, at the right distance, gives a fine tone to an old face, like those faces that we see in the sketches of Michelangelo, wrinkled like a withered apple, tanned to a sombre red, and set in the shadow of long grey hair and beard. Dirt, on such a face, a kind of weather-stain, has that dignity which dirt in England gives to an old ruin. Here the old ruin is the beggar-man, and he is not less picturesque, not less dignified, than any castle in England.

VI

A part of Venice that I like, not because it is attractive in itself, but because it is so unlike the show Venice and so like a fishing village, with its smell of the sea and ships, is the Via Garibaldi, which runs from Veneta Marina past the Public Gardens. It is a broad thoroughfare, which I can look up and down for some distance, a rare thing in Venice; and I have often sat here, intently idle,

watching every one who passes me. All that is humbler, more truly indigenous, in Venice, seems to pass, at one time or another, along that highway between the two main branches of the lagoon, the shore which looks towards San Giorgio, the Riva, and the shore which looks towards Murano, the Fondamenta Nuove. Sailors are always passing, and fishermen, with their heavy heelless shoes, and fine ruddy-brown knitted stockings, ribbed in circular coils, which they wear like top boots; the faces here are bronzed to a deeper tone of red than in any other quarter except the Giudecca. Sometimes a company of soldiers comes marching past, in their dark blue great-coats and helmets, their drab trousers and gaiters; they walk briskly, with the swinging gait of the Italian soldier.

The houses are old, and mostly white, with green and brown shutters which have faded from the crudeness of their original colours, to become a soft lilac, a delicate chocolate. There are a few booths in the middle of the road, under the little starved trees, laid out for the most part with clothes, skirts and handkerchiefs, and fruit; the two necessities of existence here, bright-coloured things to wear, and fruit to eat. A *facchino* is lying flat on his face, asleep, on one of the polished marble benches, his vivid blue trousers glittering in the heat of the sun; another *facchino* leans against a tree, smoking; men, women, and children are lying along the walk, basking in the sunlight; some of the children are

bare-footed, for the people about here are a little more sordid in their poverty than in most parts of Venice, though without that air of depression which I have noticed in the Canareggio quarter. Two little red-shawled children are sitting on a seat opposite to me, counting their treasures; groups of small people, carrying just slightly smaller babies, are resting against the entrance to the gardens. I hear at every moment the slip-slop of heelless shoes dragging their way along the pavement, and catch a glimpse of the heels of brilliant stockings, red, striped, white, occasionally a fine, ecclesiastical purple; now a whole flock of greenish yellow shawls passes, then, by itself, a bright green shawl, a grey, a blue, an amber; and scarcely two of all these coloured things are alike: the street flickers with colour, in the hot sunshine. Italian women are never at rest in their shawls; they are always unwinding them, resettling their folds, shifting them from head to shoulders, and back again, slipping out a ringed hand to sketch a whole series of gestures. And they are never in a hurry. They come and go, stop, form into groups, talk leisurely, and then go on their way, almost, I like to think, with the mechanical movement of a herd of cows, with the same deep sense of repose, of animal contentment, which comes of living in the sun.

VII

Venetian women are rarely pretty, often charm-

ing, generally handsome. And all of them, without exception, walk splendidly, not taking little mincing feminine steps, but with a fine, grave stride, due partly to the fact that they are accustomed to wear heelless slippers, which oblige them to plant the feet firmly, and the whole foot at once, without a chance of tripping upon the toes or pounding upon the heels, as women who wear tight boots are able, and only too apt, to do; they walk with almost the same action as if they were bare-footed, and almost as well. And they use the whole body in walking, not with the undulatory motion of Spanish women, but with a movement of the whole back and shoulders, in the exact swing of the stride. Venetian women do, however, remind one in many ways of Spanish women, in their way of doing the hair, of wearing the mantilla, for instance; the Moorish element, which is their bond of union, coming out so naturally in Venice, where one finds, quite as a matter of course, an *Antico Caffè dei Mori*, where a cigarette is still known as a *spagnoletto*, where the dialect touches Spanish at all points. The types of Venetian women vary in every quarter :the women of the Castello have quite a different look from the women of the Dorsoduro. In a seaport town there is always a certain intermixture of races, and Venice, with the different layers of its different occupations and conquests, is variable to a greater degree than most seaports. Remembering that nearness which Venice has always had to the East, it is not alto-

gether surprising to find among the Venetian types, and not least frequently, one which is almost Japanese. They are singularly charming, these small, dark, cat-like creatures, with their small black eyes, vivid as the eyes of a wild animal, their little noses, prettily curved in at the tip, their mouths with thick, finely curved lips, their hair, too, sometimes drawn back in the Japanese manner. And they have that look of catlike comfort and good-humour which is also a Japanese habit. Then there are many Jews here, and in the Jewish women you find often the finest type of Jewish beauty, in which the racial characteristics stop short just at the perfect moment. You find, too, but only now and again, the vivid swarthiness of the gipsy, with the gipsy's shining black hair, as black and polished as ebony, plaited and coiled tightly round the back of the head.

Then there are many quite blonde women. The Venetian red does not, indeed, exist, if it ever did, in nature; the recipes for its production may still be read: a painful process, in which you sat in the full heat of the sun, with your face covered, and your hair laid out around you to get soaked and coloured with sunlight. The women nowadays feel that the colour is not worth the headache. But they add to nature in one matter with extraordinary persistence: they powder their faces, slightly on week-days, and thickly on festas, rarely with much art; with, rather, an ingenuous obviousness which, so far as my ob-

servation goes, is unique. Even quite young girls use *poudre de riz*, without the slightest necessity for its use; possibly, for one reason, because they think it bad for the complexion to wash the face much, and powder saves a good deal of washing. It gives a charming air of sophistication to people who are not too civilised to be frankly human, who are in most things so natural and who are so happily wanting in those "little ways" which we call, by way of reproach, feminine. But they are full of fantastic contradictions, powdering their faces, which are nice, and leaving their figures, which are sometimes inclined to broaden unreasonably, to take care of themselves, without the aid or the direction of stays. And there is something elaborately artificial in the way many of them have of doing their hair, in little kiss-curls, composed in all manner of different ways; in little rows of cork-screws, or harebells tinkling along the forehead; or in trails down the side of the cheeks, as in Carpaccio's great picture of the "Courtesans". There is something, in their whole aspect, slightly self-conscious, charmingly so, indeed; a *smorfia* which gives a curious, ambiguous, at once asking and denying complaisance to their lips and eyes, as if they refused nothing without a full knowledge of what they were refusing. Women and girls, even children, dress exactly alike; and there is nothing more comical, more charming than the little people of twelve who look like twenty; brilliant, fascinating little people, at once very

childish and very mature, with their hair coiled at the back like their elders, their skirts down to their heels, their shawls too long for them, dangling to the ground, but worn with an air of infinite importance and self-sufficiency. And the colours of all these women, the elegant olives, the delicate blondes, the sombre browns, are thrown out so admirably, so finely adorned, by the vivid colours of shawls, and dresses, and stockings, which would be gaudy elsewhere, but which here, in the heat and glitter of such an atmosphere, are always in place, never immoderate; they are all part of the picture, the great *genre* picture which is Venice.

VIII

They have been giving Goldoni at the Teatro Rossini, with a company of excellent Italian comedians, and as the chatter in the gallery ends, and the chatter begins on the stage, I have found for once the perfect illusion: there is no difference between the one and the other. Voluble, living Venice, with its unchanging attitude towards things, the prompt gaiety and gravity of its temperament, finds equal expression in that gallery and, in this interpretation of Goldoni, on that stage.

Going to the theatre in Venice is like a fantastic overture to the play, and sets one's mood properly in tune. You step into the gondola, which darts at once across a space of half-lighted water, and

turns down a narrow canal between walls which seem to reach more than half-way to the stars. The tiny lantern in the prow sheds no light, is indeed no more than a signal of approach, and you seem to be sliding straight into the darkness. Here and there a lamp shines from a bridge or at the water gate of a house, but with no more than enough light to make the darkness seen. The gondola sways, swerves, and is round a sharp corner, and the water rushes against the oar as it swings the keel straight for another plunge forward. You see in flashes: an alley with people moving against the light, the shape of a door or balcony, seen dimly and in a wholly new aspect, a broad, well-lighted square, a dark church-front, a bridge overhead, the water lapping against the green stone of a wall which your elbow all but touches, a head thrust from a window, the gondola which passes you, sliding gently and suddenly alongside, and disappearing into an unseen quiet. And, whenever you turn your head, you will see, bending against the oar and swaying with every movement of this horse of the waters, his rider, the gondolier.

The realisation of Venice comes slowly, piece by piece, and it is long before one has a perfectly definite sense of the traffic, and of what that traffic means, in these streets of water, which seem at first to be made for no more than ornament and the promenade of strangers. The dust-carts, when one grazes them in the side canals, begin to suggest other uses in this

decorative water, and one day, meeting the gondola of the post-office, rowing hard from the station, one sees another, as it seems, transposition of things. Going under the Bridge of Sighs, one sees the rough, iron-bolted prison gondolas, with their square *felzi* of solid wood, pierced by air holes on each side. Crossing the Rialto one looks down on a procession of gondolas, that approach slowly, and under the tufted black hoods one sees the white flowers and favours of a wedding. Funerals cross between the Fondamenta Nuove and the cemetery island of San Michele, and the dead people still go in their gondolas, under the last, narrower, *felzi*.

Spectacular as all Venice is, there is nothing in all Venice more spectacular than the gondola. It is always difficult for me to realise that a gondola is not a living thing. It responds so delicately to a touch, the turn of a muscle; is so exquisitely sympathetic, so vivid in its pride of motion, so gentle and courteous with an adversary. And just as a perfect rider becomes one body with his horse, realising actually the fable of the centaur, so the gondolier and the gondola seem to flow into a single human rhythm. Nor is the gondola an easy creature to master. To poise yourself on the edge of the stern, and row forward, using only half a rowlock, and to shoot round corner after corner, from a narrow canal into a narrower, without so much as grazing the prow of the gondola which

meets you: that requires, at every moment, the swift and certain address of the polo-player guiding his pony through a crashing mêlée. I never quite knew whether it was more delightful to lie in a gondola and watch the land from the water, or to watch the gondola from land. From land, perhaps, at night, when something slim and dark glides by, the two rowers moving in silhouette, with the fantastic bowing motion of the little figures at the *Chat Noir;* or, again at night, when you hear a strong voice singing, and a coloured line floats down the canal, the singing boat in the midst, paper lanterns tossing a variable light over the man who stands at the prow and the women with hooded heads, smiling, who play an accompaniment on mandolins. But from the water, certainly, if it is your good luck to see the great *serenata*, such as the one I saw when the King of Italy and the Emperor of Germany played that little masque of Kings at Venice. The *galleggiante*, with its five thousand lights, a great floating dome of crystals, started from the Rialto; from the midst of the lights came music, Wagner and Rossini, Berlioz and the vivid, rattling, never quite sincere, *Marcia Reale;* and the luminous house of sound floated slowly, almost imperceptibly, down the Grand Canal, a black cluster of gondolas before it and beside it and behind it, packed so tightly together that you could have walked across them, from shore to shore. From my gondola, in the midst of all these black hulls and bristling steel

prows, through the forest of oars, upright in the water, between the towering figures of the gondoliers bending against their oars, over the heads of the mass of people heaped together on this solid, moving, changing floor of boats, I could see a yet greater crowd on every point of the shore, on the steps of the Salute, along the line of the Dogana, on every landing-stage, at every window, high up on the roofs. Bengal lights burned steadily; flash-lights darted across the sky, with their crude, sudden illumination; rockets went up, paper lanterns swayed and smoked; and as we floated slowly, imperceptibly down, it seemed as if the palaces on each side of us were afloat too, drifting past us, to the sound of music, through a night brilliant with strange fires.

What struck me then, as I found myself in the midst of this jostling, tightly packed crowd, every gondolier in violent action, shouting in that hoarse, abrupt, stomachic voice which goes so well with the unconsonanted Venetian dialect, was that not a single one of them lost his temper, though each was doing his best to outwit the other, and get his gondola a little nearer to the music; and I reflected how much the situation would have tried the temper of a London cabman. Their language, like their gestures, was but decorative. The gondolier in Venice is as fine to look at as his gondola; he has colour, too, in the ruddy dye of his face, the infinite variety of his amber shirts and blue trousers and scarlet sashes; and if you really know him, he is one of the most

charming of people. It is by no means knowing the gondoliers to have known them only as a master who hires a man, and gets him at the lowest bidding. Living on the Zattere, near which so many of them live, I have had the chance of seeing them as they are among themselves; I have played *boccie* with them in the bowling-alley under the trellised vines, from which the first drops of sap were beginning to drip; I have sat with them in the tavern parlour, beside the great chimney-corner, under the burnished pots and pans, watching them play a mysterious game with fantastic cards. And I have always felt myself to be in the company of gentlemen.

IX

From the *Casa* on the Giudecca I look across the water and see Venice. Is there another window from which one can see so much of the beauty of land and water? Opposite, along the Zattere, they are unloading the boats: I see the black hulls and a forest of masts and rigging. A steamer has come in from Trieste, and lies between San Giorgio and the Dogana, with its little black flock of gondolas about it. An orange sail creeps steadily past the window, and I hear the sail creak against the mast. High above the houses, almost with the dominance of the Suleimanié at Constantinople, the great domes of the Salute rise above the green trees and brown roofs of the Patriarch's Palace. That long line

above the water, curving slightly until San Giorgio intercepts it, is the Riva, and at all hours I can watch it change colour, and sink into shadow, and emerge with the lamps at night, a dark outline, out of which the Doge's Palace rises, always white, always mysterious, always at once solid and exquisite. Every day one sees it, beside and above the greyish green of the bulbous domes of St. Mark's, the two columns of Syrian granite on the Piazzetta, and the winged lion of St. Mark, with his fierce laughter and alert springing body, who, from that height, challenges the ships.

This long narrow island of the Giudecca, with its houses now mere shells, granaries, storehouses, or cottages for fisher people, had its palaces once, and the *Casa* in which I am living was built by Palladio, who planned the Redentore on the left, and San Giorgio Maggiore on the little neighbouring island to the right. Everything in the house is beautiful and ample: the long courtyard opening, through two stone pillars wreathed with vines, upon the garden; the stone staircase and the immense room shaped like a cross without a top, its long wall almost filled with tall and slender windows opening upon stone balconies over the water; windows at the narrow end looking over the garden, and, beyond the iron gateway with its carved stone figures on the gate-posts, over the vast green and brown orchard and vineyard, stretching to the still waters of the lagoon on the other side of the island. There are timbered roofs,

vast garrets, and a chapel with its lamp still burning before an image of the Virgin. The guests sit down to their meals in the great hall, and are so far away from each other that their presence has almost a touch of unreality; one hears and sees them vaguely, as if in a dream, and the Venetian woman who waits upon us all, passing to and fro with a sleepy dignity, has little curls of hair hanging about her eyes like a woman in one of Carpaccio's pictures. Outside, there is always sun on the garden, once a very formal garden, and now just dilapidated enough for its quaint conventionality to borrow a new refinement, a touch of ruined dignity. One may wander through low alleys of trellised vines to the water, and beyond the water, on the other side of a narrow bank of land, the sea lies.

There is, to those living on the Giudecca, a constant sense of the sea, and not only because there are always fishermen lounging on the quay, and fishing-boats moored on the side canals, and nets drying on the land, and crab-pots hanging half out of the water. There is a quality in the air one breathes, in the whole sensation of existence, which is like a purification from the soft and entangling enchantments of Venice. On the other side of the water, which can look so much like the sea, and form so rapid a barrier, yet across which every movement on the quay can be distinguished, Venice begins; and in Venice one is as if caught in an immense network, or spider's web, which, as one walks

in its midst, seems to tighten the closer about one. The streets narrow overhead, push outwards with beams and stone balconies and many turning angles; seem to loosen their hold for a moment where a bridge crosses a narrow canal between high walls and over dark water, and then tighten again in close lanes where the smells of the shops meet and fume about one's face. The lanes are busy with men in rough clothes and with women in shawls, bare-beaded, and with great soft bushes of hair, who come and go quietly, slipping past one another in these narrow spaces, where there is hardly room to pass, as the gondolas slip past one another in the narrow canals. The road is difficult to find, for a single wrong turning may lead one to the other end of Venice. This movement, the tangles of the way, the continual arresting of one's attention by some window, doorway, or balcony, put a strain upon one's eyes, and begin after a time to tire and stupefy the brain. There is no more bewildering city, and as night comes on the bewilderment grows almost disquieting. One seems to be turning in a circle, to which there is no outlet, and from which all one's desire is to escape.

Coming out at last upon the Zattere, and seeing the breadth of water before one, it is as if one had gone back to the sea. The ships lie close together along the quay, ten deep, their masts etched against the sky, the water, or that faint shadow with its hard outline (almost level, but for the larger and

lesser domes of the Redentore and the Zitelle) which is the island of the Giudecca. A few voices rise from the boats; the hulls creak gently, as if they were talking together; there is a faint plashing of water, and beyond, silent, hardly visible, unlighted by the few lamps along the quay, the island waits, a little desolate and unfriendly, but half way to the sea.

At night the moon swings in the sky, like the lamp of an illumination. There are curtains of dark, half drawn, and, higher in the sky, pale gold stars, like faint candles, in a dark which is luminous. Or, on an autumn night which is like summer, a moon like a thin silver medallion hangs low over San Giorgio, and turns slowly to gold, while the water, between moonrise and sunset, pales and glows, and the dark begins to creep around the masts and rigging.

Rain in autumn brings a new, fierce beauty into Venice, as it falls hammering on the water and rattles on the wood of the boats and settles in pools in all the hollows of the stones. Seen under that stormy light, just before sunset, with a hot yellow moon struggling to come through the rain-clouds, Venice is as if veiled, and all its colours take on a fine, deep richness, seen through water, like polished stones in sea-pools. The slender masts, the thin black network of the rigging stand out delicately, and with an almost livid distinctness. The gondolas move like black streaks on the water. For a moment the west brightens, as the sun goes down behind a space

of sky that burns white, and shivers dully, streaked with dim yellow flakes and fleeces.

There was a roaring of the sea all night, and in the morning the water splashed under the windows, almost level with the pavement. The whole Giudecca was swollen, and rose everywhere into grey waves, tipped with white as they fell over. Sea-gulls had come in from the sea, and flew in circles over the water, dipping to the crest of the waves, and curving around the boats laden with timber, that crowded close together against the Zattere. The wind still blew with violence, and a little rain fell. The sky and the water were of the same leaden grey, and the sea-gulls flying between water and sky shone like white flakes of snow, blown by the wind.

There is no city in Europe which contains so much silence as Venice, and the silence of the Giudecca is more lonely than any silence in Venice. Yet, by day and night, there are certain noises, which one learns to expect, becomes familiar with, and finds no distraction in: the roar of the sea, when there is wind on the sea-walls, a dull, continuous, enveloping sound, which seems unintelligible as one looks across at solid land on the other side of water; the loud and shaking violence of wind; the hoarse, echoing hoot and trumpeting of great black or red steamers, which pass slowly or anchor almost under the windows, to take in stores from the granaries that stand locked and barred and as if empty,

along the fondamenta; the deep splash of the oars of barges, as the men who push with long oars in the water set the oars against their rowlocks and begin the heavy rowing; the thin plash of the one oar of gondolas; the guttural cries, from water and the narrow strip of land, all in thick vowels, clotted together without a consonant between; and the ceaseless busy flapping of water upon the steps and around hulls, with little noises never twice quite the same.

X

Beyond Murano the water shines level, but with surfaces of many textures, to where the horizon ends on a thin line of low green trees. On the left, rising into the sky, are hills, dim to their summits, which sparkle with snow. In one place the tide moves visibly under you, and then the movement is over, but you are on water which just breathes, and the breath waves it into faint patterns, like moiré silk; and then it is breathless, and with a surface like satin. Here and there the water has ebbed from a mud-flat, coloured a deep green, with white sea-birds sitting on the edge of the water. Groups of stakes, set for landmarks, outline the shapes of the sand-banks; and you see the white birds sitting on the tops of the stakes. Black masses, which seem at a distance like great iron cannons, are seen, as one comes nearer, to be forts or powder-

magazines, each filling a tiny island, but for a patch of grass or a cluster of starved trees. We pass few gondolas, but oftener large boats, or barges, loaded deep and sometimes with rafts around them, and men walking barefoot, with their feet half in the water, pushing with long poles. Dark women with handkerchiefs of dark red or orange over their heads sit on chairs in the *buranelli*, narrow boats rowed by a man who stands and rows forward with two oars which cross before him.

The gondola with its two rowers moves swiftly and steadily. In front of us is Burano, with its leaning campanile and the long line of white and brown houses. To the right there is a small, formal, and mysterious island, like the Island of Death which Böcklin saw in picture after picture, but never, unless in San Francesco del Deserto, on any water of the earth. Dark green cypresses stand around the brown-roofed monastery, with its low tower and one leaning stone pine. Here, they tell you, St. Francis once came, on his way from Egypt, and the place where he preached is marked by a stone let into the wall of an inner chapel, with the inscription: *Hic est locus ubi oravit seraphicus Franciscus.* In the garden, a garden full of weeds, there is a glass shrine built over a grey and ancient log; it is the staff of St. Francis, the monk told me, and it blossomed there, and remains, a testimony, after five centuries. On a stone over the door of the cloister I read:

"O Beata Solitudo!
O Sola Beatitudo!
Elongavi fugiens, et mansi in solitudine."

The monastery is now a place of penitence, and misbehaving monks are sent here, to meditate, and return, if they can, to peace, in this lonely foothold of land among still waters.

As we row slowly around the sand-bank which lies between San Francesco and Burano, there is a luminous and breathless stillness on the water and in the air, and the reflection of the campanile and of the houses, every line and every colour repeated flawlessly, like another self rather than an image of itself, is seen reversed in the water. The real thing and the image meet, passing into one another with so little division that the eye can scarcely distinguish where the one ends and the other begins. I never saw so beautiful and so deceptive an illusion evoked out of water by the sun. Looking back at San Francesco, the cypresses and the one stone pine are scarcely less black as they plunge downwards; sea-gulls fly in the air over other sea-gulls, just a little dimmer, that seem to fly far down in the water, as in a crystal.

The island of Burano, the real island and not that magical other island in the water, is dreary and sordid; dirt lies thick in every street; the campanile is slowly settling over, there are cracks in the walls of the churches; many of the houses are already

ruinous. But if you look through the open doors you will see that every house has its piece of old oak, a chest or sideboard, with brass plates and copper pans, sometimes with china on shelves, arranged over it on the wall; and the brass and china are for the most part old, and have come down in the family, from generation to generation. The men in Burano are all fishers, the women all lace-makers. Fishing-boats lie with their nets and crab-pots in the canals; men lounge on the quays in top boots and ribbed woollen stockings; there is all the smell, dirt, and apparent idleness of a fishing village, where work waits on the tides and the weather. Women sit in every doorway, bending over the lace which they are stitching into the famous Burano point and into other delicate patterns. The oldest women are still at work with their needles; they lift weary eyes for an instant, as you bend over their work, and then the eyes turn back to the stitching. The smallest girls are at work with their needles already, and you see them, with their little pale faces, bright eyes like beads, and artists' fingers, crowded together, row after row, in the narrow rooms of the factory.

In the long central square there is a continual clatter of wooden shoes, and a passing of women and children, with coloured handkerchiefs over their heads. An old beggar with spectacles, a pointed red cap, and a long patched yellow overcoat, stops outside the window of the "Lion Crowned," and

begs for bread or soldi, and small boys thrust their heads in, and beg laughing.

It is but a short row from Burano to Torcello, and the oars of the gondola catch in the weeds of narrow shores. One sees little but weeds and broken walls and scant herbage; a few red cottages, a boat, a few ducks afloat by the bank. You land at what is hardly a village, but there is a village green, with clothes hung out to dry, and a few children playing on the green, and in the midst of the grass a very ancient stone chair, rudely hewn out, and standing against a pillar: they call it the chair of Attila, and they say that it was Attila's throne, when Venice had not yet been built upon the water. Beyond, in two red brick buildings, open in front, there are innumerable fragments, a few inches square, of Byzantine marble, carved with patterns lovely enough to survive dismembering.

On the right hand is the strange octagon of Santa Fosca, with its arcades and pillars, and the seventh-century basilica of Santa Maria, with its campanile, all somewhat ruinous and among so many ruins. Inside the doors of the Cathedral one sees a floor like St. Mark's, all in patterns of coloured marble, and walls whitewashed, and yellow with damp, where they are not lined with grey marble, or covered with Byzantine or twelfth century mosaics. The whole western wall is covered with mosaics in six tiers; there are other mosaics in the tribuna and the apse, and under the dome of the

tribuna is the episcopal throne, with the seats of the priests arranged in a semicircle like the steps of an arena: the throne is of ancient marble, but the seats are no more than a shell of restored brickwork. On the panels of the screen and pulpit there are scrolls of flowers and long-necked birds, with conventional borders, carved in the marble; but the white marble has gone green. Above are half-ruined paintings against gold backgrounds, and below, in the many-coloured marble floor, a bishop lies carved in stone, and the stone is roughened like a rock on which the tide has broken. In the mosaics of the apse there are strange designs of birds and beasts and fishes, woven into delicate patterns, peacock-coloured with an unusual subtlety of colour. At the other end of the church the whole wall, to the brown rafters, is alive with the hard bright shapes of twelfth-century mosaic. There are heavens and hells, rows on rows of haloed saints in glory, angels blowing into conchs, strange demons, men and gods, all, row above row, on the dead gold with carpets of green grass and coloured flowers and white clouds; naked figures among flames; skulls, with separate hands and feet, and with snakes twined through their eyeholes; heads with curled hair and earrings among red flames, cherubim with wings crossed beneath their chins, Mary with outstretched arms, and Christ sitting in judgment. These mosaics have been lately restored, and their fresh aspect, among so much and such ancient ruin, does

but bring a touch of irrelevant new colour into this temple of ruined splendour, which stands here, on the malarious island, with an almost mysterious magnificence in decay.

XI

GOLDONI, in his memoirs, tells us that the Venetians sang all day long, "the shopkeepers laying out their wares, the workmen coming home from work, the gondoliers waiting for their masters"; and he adds: "Gaiety is at the root of the national character, and jesting is at the root of the Venetian language." The day is past when the gondoliers sang Tasso, and the shopkeepers do not sing now; but they stand at the doors of their shops and smoke, and, like every one else in Venice, take things comfortably. *Il dolce far niente* is a sensation which can scarcely be realised more completely than in Venice; and with such a sky, such water, and such streets, who would look for a bustling race of business people, like the Milanese? In Venice no one will work very hard for the sake of "getting on": why should he? I never saw poor people who seemed so happy, and who were really so comfortable in their poverty, as the very poorest people here. The softness of the climate, the little on which the comforts of life depend, permit poverty, even beggary, to remain dignified. Simply to lie in the sun, to have just

enough to eat, and plenty of cheap cigars to smoke: a poor man demands little more than that, and it is rare indeed that he does not get so much. Time scarcely exists in Venice; it certainly does not exist for the idle poor. They hanker after no luxuries; for, in Venice, merely to live is a luxury. Think of a city where bread and wine, fruit and flowers, are the chief things hawked about the streets! Wherever you go you hear the cry of "Acqua!" you see a basket heaped up with brilliant flowers, and not far off some one is lying asleep, a *facchino* in vivid blue, one wooden shoe under his head for a pillow, stretched at full length in any nook of shade. More even than in Rome, scarcely less, and far more agreeably, than in Naples, the whole place belongs to the people. The beggar who curls up asleep on your doorstep has an equal right with your own, and, so far as the doorstep is concerned, a greater, for you do not require it to sleep on, and he does. And there is scarcely an inch of Venice where he cannot lie down and go to sleep whenever he likes. Streets where a horse or cart is unknown are so surprisingly clean, comfortable, and leisurely; they are made to be loitered in, lain upon, and for every man to have his way with. The moral of "The Sick King in Bokhara,"

> "That, though we take what we desire,
> We must not snatch it eagerly,"

needs no enforcement in Venice. Every one takes

what he wants; but he takes it gently, gracefully, as a matter of course. Your cigars belong to your gondolier as much as to yourself; and if he has two oranges, one of them is yours.

The Venetians have but few amusements. There are four theatres, and these are only open for a few months out of the year, and supported only by strolling companies; there is a theatre of marionettes open still more rarely; and that is all. Once upon a time there was a café-chantant, with a little company from Vienna: Annie Vivanti has sung there; but it has dwindled almost out of existence, and there is not a music-hall or a public dancing-hall in the whole city. No doubt this is partly because the people are so poor that they cannot pay for even the cheapest amusements; but is it not also because they do not require them, finding sufficient pleasure in things as they are, in the mere quiet gaiety of daily life, the fact of living always in the midst of a *décor de théâtre*, of which they are themselves acting the drama? That animal content which comes over one in Venice, taking away the desire of action and the need of excitement which waylay the mind and the senses under less perfect skies, makes it just as possible to be happy without running after amusement as the simplicity of the conditions of life makes it possible for the poor man to live on polenta and a little fruit. There is something drowsy in the air of Venice, as there is some-

thing a little sleepy in the eyes of the Venetians. Is not life, to those who live there always, as it is to those who come and go in it for pleasure, a kind of day-dream?

SPRING, 1894, and 1897, and AUTUMN, 1903.

NAPLES

NAPLES

I

I HAVE rarely entered a strange city without a certain apprehension; but no city ever filled me with such terror as Naples. These long streets of tall, mean houses, from which narrow alleys climbed the hill, and descended to the harbour, in row after row of meaner and not less tall houses, all with their little iron balconies, over which clothes and linen draggled, all with their crowded, squalid, patched, and coloured throngs of restless life; the cracking of whips, the clatter of wheels and of horses' hoofs on the uneven stones; the thud of the cow-bell, the sharper tinkle of the goat-bell, as the creatures wander about the streets or wait at the doors of houses; the rattling of bootblacks' brushes, the petulant whine of beggars, the whole buzz of that humming, half-obliterated Neapolitan, with its punctuation of gestures; the rush and hustling of those sidewalks, after the ample and courteous leisure of Rome; something sordid in the very trees on the sea-front, second-rate in the aspect of the carriages that passed, and of the people who sat in them; the bare feet, rags,

rainbow-coloured dirt, sprawling and spawning poverty of Santa Lucia, and not of Santa Lucia alone; the odour of the city; and then the indiscoverable length and extent of it, the ways that seemed to lead in whatever direction I wanted to go, and then ended suddenly, or turned aside in another direction; the darkness up the hill, and the uncertainty of all those new, as yet unknown, roads: that, as I turned away from the sea, when night began to come down upon it, mounted to my head like some horrible fume, enveloping me with disgust, possessing me with terror. I have got a little accustomed to it now; I know my way through those streets, which are, after all, simple enough in their arrangement; I have come to see certain advantages, even, in the turning of all this dirt and poverty out into the sun; I find it a touching tribute to cleanliness that every other poor person whom you see is hunting for his own or his neighbour's vermin; but, all the same, I think my first impression is likely to last.

I do not think that the Neapolitans are more vicious or intend to be more objectionable than other people, but they are poor, naturally untidy; they live in the street because there is sun and air in the street, and it does not occur to them that there is anything in human nature to hide. They have an absolute, an almost ingenuous, lack of civilisation, and after seeing the Neapolitans I have more respect for civilisation. I am not convinced

that the whole of the pavement belongs to the dirtiest part of the people who walk on it, and that these have exactly the right to encamp with their wives and families in the way of one's feet, and to perform quite the whole of their toilet before one's eyes. For these people, whom you see in Santa Lucia and the Strada del Porto and along the whole of the quays, are as shameless as animals: look into their faces, and you will see in their great, dark eyes the unintelligent regard of animals. Old age and infancy are here more horrible than anywhere else; that beginning and ending of human life in helplessness and physical dishonour are here emphasised with all the cruelty of which nature, left to herself, is capable. A Christian ascetic, wishing to meditate on the disgust of the flesh, might well visit these quays. There he will see the flaccid yellowness of old women, like the skin of a rotten apple; wrinkles eaten in with grime, until they broaden into ruts; feet and ankles that have been caked and roasted and soaked into iridescent reds, smoky violets, shot purples; the horror of decayed eyes, deformed limbs, hair crawling with lice; and about these dishonoured bodies flutters a medley of blackened and yellowing linen, tattered trousers without buttons, tattered dresses without strings, torn shawls, still loud in colour, but purple where they had been red, and lavender where they had been blue. And all this malodorous medley is a-swarm, hoarse voices crying, hands in continual

movement, the clatter of heelless shoes on the pavement, the splash of emptied vessels, laughter, the harsh notes of a song, rising out of their midst like the bubble of steam escaping out of a boiling pot.

II

Naples varies in aspect according as you see it from above or below, from the side which looks towards Vesuvius, the side which looks towards Capri, the side which merges into Posillipo; and no generalisation can express the effect of this precipitous and straggling town, under the shadow of the burning mountain, and itself crawling up and down the sides of volcanic hills, set in a half-circle against the curve of the bay. Looking from Capodimonte you would say that it nestled among green trees; looking from the sea-front you would say that it was built out of the sheer rock. And its colour varies like its contour. Rain warmed by sunshine brings out the finest colours, and shows you the roofs and railed and windowed walls in their most effective groupings, house piled above house, like rock piled above rock, green foliage seeming to grow out of their crevices. There never was a town which seemed to have been so little made, to have grown so entirely according to its own whim, and with so little regard to any consideration but the crowding of houses into every available inch of ground, street intersecting street, and *salite*, *scale*, *rampe* rising out

of these intersections wherever an unfilled corner could be found. Looking down on the side streets of Chiaia and Toledo is like looking down the clefts in a rock, the crevices of a mountain side; looking up them, to the glimpses of the hill above, is like looking up from the bottom of a gorge. And whenever you climb, by stairways or winding terraces, to a certain height, you see on the east the double ridge of Vesuvius, smoke coiling into clouds above the crater, its sides, in clear weather, spotted white with houses, in dull weather an indistinguishable mass of violet or purple, like the colour of thunder-clouds; on the south, the bay, in which Capri and the ridged coast of Sorrento appear and disappear with every change of weather, like the stains in stone, or a picture which the magic-lantern flashes upon and away from the sheet.

III

Naples has ceased to be merely horrible to me, a boiling pot; it has become a witches' cauldron. I begin to be fascinated by those streets which are corridors, with their violent shadows, their obscure exuberance of life; those strange glimpses, as I climb at night through terrace after terrace of sordid streets, the houses open to view, the one large room lit with the smoking oil-lamp, the figures bending over it, the white beds set side by side, from one of which you see already the nightcapped head of the

grandmother, or a child's tumbled black hair; vague figures still leaning into the darkness from their balconies, now and then the sudden descent of a basket at the end of a string, the sound of a mandolin or piano-organ, a song, or the rattle of feet on the floor; for the most part silence, or a low chatter which does not reach me. Lights shine out suddenly from curtained windows, doors open and shut, you hear the bolts drawn. And all kinds of strange archways, passages, steps leading up or down, indefinite turnings, perplex one at every step. There is a crucifix which I pass every night; it is only a crucifix painted upon wood, but it is set up in a shrine like the gable of a house; there are five oil-lamps about it, which cast singular lights on the suffering figure, hanging there, as if on a Calvary, at the side of the pavement, with fresh flowers at its feet. That, too, seems to me like something not quite natural, a part of the same sorcery which has piled all these rocky ways and set up these cavernous houses. No, there never was a town so troubling, so disquieting, so incalculable as Naples, with its heavenly bay lying out in front for strangers to gaze at, and all this gross, contentedly animal life huddled away in its midst, like some shameful secret.

IV

Wherever I go in Naples, in the streets, the theatres, the churches, the cafés, I see the same

uncouth violence of life, the same ferment of uncivilisation. Occasionally, when two Neapolitans meet in the street, they kiss one another with a loud kiss; for the most part they do not shake hands, they do not nod, they do not lift their hats; they stare fixedly, with an expression which I took to mean violent aversion until I came to find it indicated extreme friendship. Watching from a little distance a group of men at a café table, you cannot tell whether they are or are not having a serious altercation. When a Neapolitan gesticulates he does it with all his fingers and the whole of his face; when he does not gesticulate, he is rigid. All that is best, certainly, but all that is most typical in the Neapolitan seems to me to be summed up in the writer who more than any other has given in literature the whole savour of Naples. Matilde Serao makes on one the impression of a good-humoured gnome. Full of strength, sincerity, emotion, full of an irresistible charm of humanity, she is so short and stout as to be almost square; her head, too, with its low forehead, is square; and she sits humped up, with her head between her shoulders, all compressed vivacity, which is ready to burst forth at any moment in a flood of energetic, humorously emphatic words, to which her leaping gestures with her short fat fingers, in front of her nose, of her grimacing eyes, of her cheeks wrinkled with laughter, add a further and a yet more grotesque emphasis.

I heard the "Cavalleria Rusticana" one night at

the San Carlo theatre, and, though the character of the music is properly Sicilian, it seemed to me to have a good deal in it of the people among whom it is so popular. This crackling music, a fire which crackles out, has an acute, feverish, quite Southern sentimentality, the sentimentality of the mandolin and the knife. Kindling, certainly, while you listen to it, it is wiped out, as a sponge wipes out figures on a slate, with the first breath of air you draw outside. And the true, canaille, Neapolitan music, the Piedigrotta songs and the rest, which you hear all day long, shouted, whistled, played on piano-organs, on mandolins, in the streets, in the restaurants, in the cafés-chantants, have they not the very odour of the streets in them? The songs are often enough obscene, as popular songs often enough are, and to hear Emilia Persico or Maldacea sing them, with a knowing vivacity, an abominable languor, is to realise all that they are capable of in the way of significant expression. But in the tunes themselves, with their heady notes, their pauses and rushes, their careful uncertainties of rhythm, their almost Spanish effects of monotony, there is something at once greasy and fiery, an acrid vulgarity which stings the senses, revolting and depraving, with a kind of intoxication like the intoxication of cheap wine.

At Easter the Neapolitans mourn for the death of Jesus Christ as the Greeks mourned for the death of Adonis. It is a sacred play to them, in which they take the same turbulent, and, for the moment,

absorbing interest, as in an opera at San Carlo, or a melodrama at the Mercadante. On Good Friday, during the "Tre Ore" of the Passion, I went into the popular central church of Santa Trinità Maggiore. Between the high altar and the pulpit, where a queer, black figure in his cornered hat preached with a sounding voice and the gestures of a puppet, there was a rough platform, draped with blue cloth, on which was an orchestra of black-coated gentlemen and some singers, who sang with high Mascagni voices. The people, coming in continuously by twos and threes, rushed about the church as if it were the market-place, precipitately, greeting their friends with little sharp hisses of recognition, turning about in their chairs, chattering in whispers, waving their hands to one another, standing and arranging one another's hats. Never have I seen such bustling, restless, disorderly churches, or people so uncivilised in their devotions. During the "three hours" the church was packed in all its corners, people sitting on the altar-steps, and on the altars, perched in and around all the confessionals; the men piled their hats into the empty holy-water basins, the women who had come without hats did not cover their heads with handkerchiefs; during the sermon all listened attentively, as to a really absorbing play. On the day before Holy Thursday, there had been the celebration of the Santo Sepolcro. The doors of the churches were draped in black, the high altar was covered with black cloth, and on a black cloth

before the high altar the crucifix was laid out, as if in a tomb. Some of the Christs were small, of dark metal, almost indistinguishable from a little distance; others were large, made of painted wood, with smears of red paint for the five wounds; and a crowd came and went all day long, mostly women, and these women knelt and kissed the five wounds, almost prostrating themselves on the floor. There was something grotesque, familiar, amorous, extravagant, in this unending procession of women, rich and poor, young and old, all, one after another, dropping on their knees, leaning over the sacred body, whose passion was shown to them with so visible a significance; something, I cannot tell what, barbaric, infantile, sensuous, in the sight and sound of all those devout and eager kisses, which they gave with a passionate solemnity, as to a lover.

V

Outside Naples, between Vesuvius and the sea, half buried and half recovered from the earth, the ghastly suburb of Pompeii repeats, like a remote echo, the very note of Naples. Pompeii, though you will find it large enough when you follow all the intersections of its abrupt, crossing ways, remains in the memory like a toy city, or a cabinet in a museum. And, as one walks in these streets, in which noise or silence is alike oppressive, interrupting, it is possible to persuade oneself that one is

merely visiting a museum, looking at curiosities. In so frightful a step back of nearly twenty centuries, the mind reels, clutching at that somewhat pacifying thought, for at least its momentary relief. And then, all at once, turning aside into an empty street from the guide and the visitors, you are seized, and, as it were, imprisoned within the terror of this image of the immortality of death, before which all the legends of hell become credible, seeing how hard it is to escape, even by death, out of the bondage of even a material indestructibility. Here are the bodies of men and women, moulded for ever in the gesture of their last moment, and these rigid earthly corpses are as vivid in their interrupted life as the wet corpses lying on the slabs of the Morgue, the suicides of yesterday. These hastily set up walls might have been built last year, and the rut of the waggon-wheels in the solid pavement of lava is like a wheel-mark left overnight in the dry mud of a country road. The brothel and the temple are here, side by side, and here, only just cleansed from its burial, is a villa, its walls still bright with paint, still eloquent with frescoes, the little bronze and marble images still smiling about the fountains and flower-beds of the central garden; a pot, the yellow rust of lava corroding it, set over the fire which went out suddenly on that twenty-fourth of August, A.D. 79. Feeling the stone and mortar of these jerry-built walls, noting the conventional glibness of these graceful decorative paintings, realising, by the very

signs of its "pleasant sins," that here, after all, was but the Brighton of its day, you seem, by the consciousness of all that is trivial, temporary, accidental in it, to be brought closer to that so strangely capricious survival of ancient death. And then, going out into the road, in the first step beyond the hedge, in the first breath of relief at the sight of the little station, the two hotels for visitors, the quiet fields in which men are digging, fruitful fields stretching out to the roots of the mountains all around, Vesuvius smoking placidly above, this unbearable sense of the nearness of life suspended so many years ago drops back suddenly, and again it is as if it had never been, and again you have persuaded yourself that this is after all only a show in a museum, a collection of curiosities, a toy city which had never really had anything too intimate to do with humanity.

VI

There is in Naples the image of a world, which adds a new world to one's contemplation, not less vivid and swarming than those streets; and that world of the Aquarium seems as real, as natural, in all its fantastic, extravagant, and enigmatical life, as the life of human beings. It is, indeed, first by its humanity that it strikes us, by the strange irony of the likeness which one sees in these scaled, pulpy, and many-tentacled creatures of the sea, in the very

expression of their eyes and bodies, and also in the whole manner of their occupations among the rocks and their neighbours, with the faces and the doings of men. There is not a human vice or absurdity which I have not seemed to see in these drowsy, and irritable, and rapacious, and surly, and preoccupied creatures, their whole lives spent in catching flies (with what an elaborate mechanism of means to that end!) in coiling and uncoiling an army of suckers to the very obliteration, almost, of the centre of their being; in fanning themselves, with soft, unresting wings, forwards and backwards, forwards and backwards, for ever, neither turning nor ceasing for a moment. Some have the aspect of eternal age, as others have the curse of eternal activity. In the great, sullen, flat creatures with their purple bodies, their bull-dog jaws, their heavy eyes, I see the gross bourgeois, as he is everywhere in the world; it seems that he inhabits the water as he inhabits the earth, and with the same authority. Is there not a heavy coquetry in the motions of a certain kind of eel, the very effervescence of bumptious youth in the little fishes with fins which look like arms a-kimbo, the very parody of our aspirations in the diaphanous, delicately coloured creatures, edged with lavender, who have puffed all their life into their heads, which for ever pant and strain upwards like balloons, as if trying to free themselves of the little tangle of body still left to them? Then, too, there is a fantasy more terrible than any nightmare,

a soft, seductively coloured, deceptive, strangling life in these clinging, and absorbing, and stealthy apparitions of the sea, which come and go in the water with the sudden and soft violence of the water itself.

Coming up out of the twilight, where I have been gazing into the glass boxes filled with water, wondering at these uneasy miracles of the sense of touch, I find myself replunged into the bustle of Naples; for the concert has begun in the Villa, and people are walking to and fro under the trees, and sitting on the chairs about the band-stand, listening to the harsh din of those brass instruments playing their noisy, military, Italian music. The garden of the Villa Nazionale lies for a mile along the sea-front, from the Largo della Vittoria almost to the beginning of Posillipo, and you can stand under the curdling blossoms of the Judas trees, and still see the blue water shining under the afternoon sun or the tossing of the little waves when the wind begins to blow them grey. On the afternoon when I had visited the Aquarium, clouds began to climb over the top of the hill, catching stormy colours and then turning leaden; and presently the concert came abruptly to an end, as the rain poured with a straight, steady violence, scattering the people hither and thither into the little wooden cafés, under the thin branches of trees, under the drooping hoods of cabs, and behind the flapping curtains of trams. I sat in one of the cafés and watched the hurry of

people unprepared for anything but sunshine; the blind rush through the puddles, the shelterless lingering under dripping trees, the half-desperate, half-hoping glances upward at the grey sky, which might be blue again at any moment or perhaps not for an hour's time. All the brightness, the unconsidering gaiety of Naples had gone out like a candle in the wind; life seemed to come angrily to a pause, in this sudden hostility of nature. Presently I heard the twanging of a string: two men with mandolin and fiddle were standing in the doorway, and a woman began to sing one of the Piedigrotta songs. A man carrying a cloth-covered box came in, took off his cap, and went smilingly, persistently, from table to table with his tortoise-shell combs, his corals, and his brooches of lava. Outside the window crouched a dark, handsome, half-witted beggar-girl, with her red handkerchief over her head, her white teeth shining in a smile; she held out her little brown hand, beckoning for alms; and standing there, bare-footed in the rain, seemed to bring back the Neapolitan accent to Naples.

Spring, 1897.

FLORENCE : AN INTERPRETATION

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I. DONATELLO

Florence is a corridor, through which the beauty and finery of the world have passed. That new Spring which Botticelli painted, and which was the Renaissance, flowered into the Florentine lilies with more of its ardour, and a more "hard and determinate outline," than in any other Italian soil. Giotto's Campanile, itself a lily, is the seal and signature of what in Florence is straight, slender, full of formal grace. Florentine art has always been an art of form, of delicate but precise outline, and the shape of the city, of its bridges and palaces, is of a severe elegance, and it lies, glittering like silver and with all the daintiness of silver-work, in the hollow of the Apennines. Looking down on it from San Miniato, Brunelleschi's dome and the dragon-neck of the Palazzo Vecchio and the flowerlike Campanile stand out like great jewels from the casket, and the Arno clasps it like a jewelled band. It is garlanded with gardens, encircled with hills, but it is the river that completes its beauty.

There are more masterpieces in Florence than in

any city in the world. Masterpieces are at every street corner, there are whole squares of masterpieces, like that square which contains Brunelleschi's dome, Giotto's tower, and Ghiberti's gates. Santa Maria Novella conceals wonders, but is there anything inside more lovely than those outer walls of marble? The visitor hastening to see the sculpture which it contains forgets to realise how much the Bargello is one of its own treasures. Picture-galleries in palaces call one away from what is lovely in the streets, the river-side, the bridges, though indeed the art of the bridges, the aspect which has come to that river-side, are akin to all that Florence has created in paint and marble in those galleries. If we could endure so continual a pressure and solicitation of beauty, no city would be so good to live in as Florence; but the eyes cannot take rest in it: they are preoccupied, indoors and out of doors; this prevalence of rare things becomes almost an oppression. That is why it is better to live outside the gates, a little way up one of the hillsides: to look down on Florence, "washed in the morning water-gold," as Browning saw it, or at night, like a flower that opens secretly with evening, and to go down into it on daily errands, to see one beautiful thing and come away.

Florence to-day is like a woman who has been praised so long that she has become self-conscious, and seems to have no longer an individual life of her own, but to await homage. Her Venus typifies

her, the chilly conscious Venus of the Medici. She has no sorcery, and there is no part of her charm which you cannot define. Time scarcely changes her, and she suffices to the American tourist as easily as she sufficed to Cosimo. Hers are all tangible beauties and all forms of life in which the rhythm is never broken. Excess is alien to her; to her, exuberance is not beauty. The mystery of Leonardo is a foreign thing to her, which comes and goes in her midst, a visitor welcomed but not understood. She understands Verrocchio. Michelangelo leaves in one of her courtly chapels a rock half hewn out of the earth itself: that "Day" who lives with a more intense, complete, and overpowering life than the other more finished figures. But Florence is never really at home with Michelangelo. She made Donatello in her own image.

In Florence there is nothing of the majesty of Rome nor of the sea-magic of Venice. Rome is made out of the eternal hills, on which the ends of the world have come, age by age; it is the city made glorious by Michelangelo and Michelangelo typifies its glories. Venice is born out of the marriage of land and sea, and it was Titian who took up the Doge's ring out of the water, and perpetuated the new ecstasy of colour. But Florence, marvellously built, every stone set decorously on stone, a conscious work of craftsmen upon material naturally adaptable, is represented rather by sculpture than by painting, and, in painting, by precise

and sensitive design, an almost sculptured outline. Florence, the city of all the arts, the corridor through which all the arts have passed and in which they still linger, is the city made to be a shrine for Donatello.

To Donatello there was no conflict between the rhythm of beauty and the rhythm of life; none even between a sense of reality exasperated to a point of fierce intensity and a suavity and grace of form which has in it a quality of abstract joy; none between a decoration of great elaborateness and a culminating effect of entire simpleness, a sufficing unity. He has no distinction to make between reality and the ideal; he has no prejudice against ugliness, yet never falls into the grotesque; he will work in any medium; adopt, as it seems, any manner; yet an individuality, curiously strange and certain, is seen in all his work, through all his disguises; there is as sharp a savour in his laughing and dancing children as in his Magdalen who has sinned and grown old. He is part of the Renaissance, and, together with Botticelli, expresses the secret and perpetuates the delicate, severe essence of Florence, as it came in that age to perfection.

Between the Greeks and Donatello there had been great sculpture; but the art, as an individual and organic thing, awoke only in Donatello. The sculptors of the Gothic cathedrals, the carvers of tombs, had inspirations of genius, and no art in bronze or marble could do things finer of their kind

than those representations of death, in which the faith of the Middle Ages seems to survive. There is a bronze tombstone in the church of S. Trinità in Florence which, with its wry mouth and puckered eyelids, denoting a ghastly continuance of life, suggests almost the huddled grandeur, here funereal, of Rodin's Balzac. How much Donatello learnt from these great craftsmen may be seen at Siena, in the bronze tombstone of Bishop Pecci. The folds are freer, easier, with less of that mighty emphasis of the Middle Ages; and they are definite, imagined as covering the limbs of an actual body. The bronze becomes almost pictorial. And, as we see Donatello going back to the Middle Ages, reviving a manner and yet experimenting upon it, so we see him experimenting with the energy of life itself, in all directions, not content without turning bronze or marble or wood or stone to his own uses, and leaving them with new possibilities for others; for Rodin, certainly, who has learned many of his secrets. With Donatello awakens and dies a whole art of his own, but after him ancient sculpture is over and modern sculpture has begun.

To see the likeness between Donatello and that fresh, curious and eager, half childlike and wholly experienced spirit and temper which blossomed with the Renaissance, and with special rarity at Florence, it is enough to see the bronze David in the Bargello and the Judith and Holofernes in the Loggia. The David of Michelangelo, the copy made

of it, dominates Florence, a giant against its sky; but it is not of the nature of Florence, a native growth. It has an admirable strength, an easy bigness; but how much more Florentine, how much more interesting, the subtle, almost perverse daintiness of Donatello! Again, in the Loggia, how significant it is to contrast the Judith of Donatello, with its exquisite quietude, in which horror becomes beauty, quieted into eternal rest, with the Perseus of Cellini, its neighbour there, and so out of place. The Perseus is done with conscious heat and exterior vivacity of life, with an air of bravado in the whole pose: the generalised limbs and features, the decorative body, showy and fine, the terrorless Medusa head from which the blood drips like clotted pearls, the trunk from which blood sprouts like a bunch of grapes; the over-elaborated pedestal, with the marble Isises, its niches with restless bronze figures dancing, or meaninglessly arrested. Michelangelo is great and Cellini is little, but both seem to be set up in Florence for the better identification of the Florentine spirit in Donatello.

In the David we have a delicate manly joy, too simple to be heroic, too young to be conscious of the greatness of an instinctive action; and in the flower-like and girlish body, equipped so daintily and so daringly for warfare, Donatello has created the modern type of youthful male beauty, the keen-witted younger brother of the Faun of Praxiteles, in whom the soul has awakened, but only to a keener

consciousness of the delightfulness of life. The face under the garlanded hat is full of that modern beauty in which expression counts for so much; but the boy is already unconscious of the terrible head on which his mailed foot treads. Judith, as she raises the sword to cut through the offered neck of Holofernes, has a more passionate meaning in her eyes; her serene, slender, and elegant beauty is the destructive beauty of woman, and the man who sits at her feet, helpless, dazed by lust, with closed eyes and open palms, awaits death sleepily, like a lover. This man and this woman keep the eternal attitude with a ghastly and lovely placidity; and it is with a faultless sense of beauty that Donatello has woven them together into this mortal rhythm.

In the Judith the two bodies, standing and sitting, fit into one as if moulded out of a single substance, yet with no loss of whatever is essential in the drama. And in the David also there is a like flawless ingenuity of composition: the head, with its helmet, fitting into the space between the two legs, one wing of the helmet broken sharp off on the side next to the ground, the other rising up the leg along the greaves, so decoratively; the toes which curl over in their bronze sandals on the lower part of the dead cheek, between the beard and moustache; the decorative value, dainty, not terrifying, of the decapitated head on which the flower-like creature tramples.

In the Judith and in the David, which are both

made out of terrible subjects, there is an equal share of that singular joy which we find somewhere in almost all the best work of Donatello. Does it come to them from a capture of life or from a last perfection of style? It is to be distinguished, giving a thrilling, not easily explicable quality of attraction to work not in itself at first attractive. In the Zuccone of the Campanile we have a harmony, unlike any other in sculpture, except perhaps in some of those statues on Gothic cathedrals to which an almost grotesque poignancy seems to come by some humble accident; a harmony made out of elements of frankly apprehended uncouthness, in head, figure, and drapery, set to become mutually significant. In the Poggio Bracciolini of the Cathedral there is the same acceptance of fact, a kind of psychological treatment giving its value to this elaborately simple dignity. In the St. George we have a kind of compromise, not perhaps for once wholly satisfying, between the heroic Greek sculpture and the knightly sculpture of the Middle Ages. In medallions of the Madonna, and in busts of children (like the St. Lawrence of the Sacristy) there is an equal intensity, in the one of pathos, in the other of innocence, in which the feeling and the form are precisely in balance; but in works like the wooden statue of the Magdalen, the marble statue of John the Baptist, and the painted terra-cotta bust of Niccolò da Uzzano, there is a kind of lean and hungry realism which brings a new fierce quality, almost but not

quite eager enough to break through the bounds of form. The Magdalen is a representation of an aged sinner, a kind of *Vieille Heaulmière* done very literally after nature, and it rivals and excels all that has been done in the typically Spanish art of wood-carving. In the bust of Niccolò da Uzzano experiment is carried further, has recurred to the forgotten art of painting sculpture: and the head, with the blood in its cheeks, the eyeballs alive under the brows, which seems to turn visibly on its wrinkled neck and to be about to open its mouth and speak, has a terrifying but not really grotesque beauty, though indeed a bewildering and exciting thing, perhaps too intimately and deceptively human.

And if, in these masterpieces of an art which has seemed ready to give up everything for expression, an art in which beauty begins to be as passionately troubled as the later art of Botticelli, but for a human not for a religious passion, the rhythm of life may seem to be in danger of overflowing the rhythm of formal beauty, there is at least one piece of work, the relief in sandstone of the Annunciation in Santa Croce, in which the decorative quality comes to be almost everything. Under the frame of grey and gold, with laughing and mocking children at the top, there is something sumptuous, fantastically elegant in the elaborate patterns of gold and scroll-work, discs, cones, tassels, and, everywhere, wings; in the gold at the borders of the robes, and at the wrists, and on the angels' shoulders, and in

the ribbons that flutter out a wing's length, and on the binding of the book which the Virgin holds in her hand. In the two exquisite and sensitive figures, which stand inside the frame as if inside an open door, there is something of the rhythm of Botticelli, with an even more personal, alluring, not quite simple grace of aspect. Drama and decoration go well together, neither losing for the other's sake, in such splendid work in relief as the dance of the daughter of Herodias in the Baptistery at Siena. Ghiberti's Baptism of Christ faces it, on the brighter side of Jacopo della Quercia's font, for which it was done; yet even Ghiberti seems emphatic and obvious after it. The dance is over, Salome has brought in the head, and shrinks back, struck suddenly aghast at what she has done, while her mother covers her face with her hands, and only Herod, unmoved, leans forward and looks at the head which a servant hands to him on a platter. There is detail, but all serves the illusion while it helps the decoration: the table, the dishes, the napkin, the windows beyond, and a player with a mandolin, and, yet beyond, other idle heads at other windows. Here the rhythm is added, like a fine transparent garment, to the invention, the reality.

But it is in the Cantoria that all Donatello's qualities of abundant and rhythmical life fall and flow together, like the sea in its unbroken harmony of movement. Wave interlaces wave of laughing and leaping children, who dance to a melody which

they render visible, and are the only carven things in the world that justify Keats when he says in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter."

So much music has never been put literally into marble. In the Cantoria of Luca della Robbia, over against it on the walls of the Bargello, the music, though it has been an inspiration, is tamed to another medium, where it becomes quiescent, an inaudible gesture. And there, with all its gracious and simple beauty, the whole design remains a little formal, does not live equally and with an inner life throughout the whole squared and framed series of groups. But in Donatello one impulse of exultation flows and reflows, unchecked, wave-like, coming and going with an irresistible joy. And there is exquisite and appropriate beauty in the whole design of the gallery, with its delicately formal vases and shells, its subtle touches of green and gold, its blue and orange discs in the under-panels, where mosaic is added to marble with a new and admirable sense of decoration. The faint mosaic background throughout is itself an invention. Here, for once, is amplitude of decoration, all that the Renaissance ever used or misused, adjusted with a perfect sense of the whole, whose outline it fills, does not overflow, with all the vitality of beauty.

II. LEONARDO DA VINCI

The wisdom and mystery of Leonardo have nothing in them akin to Florence, yet it was at Florence, as Pater tells us, that "Leonardo's history is the history of his art; he himself is lost in the bright cloud of it." It was in Florence, and from Verrocchio, that Leonardo learned the desire of perfection and the love of toil. But his desires were never tangible or limited, he brought to this city of clear outline and exquisite finality something which could never be contained within the limits that satisfied it. It was in Florence that what was subtlest in his vision came to him, and his model and image of the soul was found in a Florentine woman; though indeed, if the Renaissance made Monna Lisa, she is nearer sister to the Sphinx than to Simonetta. In the aspect of Monna Lisa there is more than the revelation of life or the creation of form; there is a suggestion of something more beautiful than the beauty of visible things; she has a secret, which she will not tell. To a city so satisfied with the world, so content to be alive in a world decorated after its pleasure, Leonardo comes as startlingly as Savonarola, yet with no mission. Savonarola strips off one lovely veil after another from the beauty of mortal things, rending them angrily; but Leonardo transfigures reality as with a new veil, adding mystery to beauty, and awakening a new longing in the mind. What he learned from Florence he gave back in a

rarer gift, and he remains there, an exception, as he must remain always for the whole world, because no personality so flawless and so unlimited has yet been seen among men.

In Leonardo da Vinci the desire of perfection was organic. He bewildered his contemporaries and he has bewildered later students of his life and work by a simple, undeviating devotion to the perfect achievement of everything to which he set his hand. Bandello sums up for us the world's naïve astonishment that any artist should be always "about his father's business" in a narrative of how at one time he would stand on his scaffolding, busy painting, from morning to night, and then do nothing for three or four days but "spend an hour or two in contemplating his work, examining and criticising his figures," and then, in the heat of the day, walk from the other end of Florence, "mount the scaffolding, seize a brush, add two or three touches to a single figure, and return forthwith." In 1501 a Carmelite priest in Florence answers the questionings of Isabella d' Este: "Leonardo's life," he says, "is changeful and uncertain; it is thought that he lives only for the day. Since he has been in Florence he has worked only on one cartoon. . . . The study is not yet complete. . . . He is entirely wrapped up in geometry and has no patience for painting." For sixteen years he is at work on the equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, of which all trace has now disappeared; the portrait

of Monna Lisa, after four years' work upon it, seemed to him unfinished. And, meanwhile, he has given up years to the study of the flight of birds, and announces that he has discovered the secret of human flight; he has inspected strongholds for Cesare Borgia, turned the course of the Arno, invented masques and tourneys for the marriage of the Sforzas, written his great "Treatise on Painting," and is famed for his skill in playing on a lyre of his own invention, and for his bodily strength and princely manners. At one moment we find an observer writing of him: "His mathematical experiments have withdrawn him from painting to such an extent that he cannot endure the sight of a brush." And it is after this, when he is already fifty years of age, that his great period of painting begins. He worked with infinite slowness, and a Quattrocentist poet alludes to Leonardo as one who "perhaps excels all others, yet cannot tear himself away from a picture, and in many years scarce brings one to completion." Leonardo aimed at nothing less than finality, and when he left his own art for science, or for the attainment of no matter what end, he was aiming at the perfecting of a universal genius, the dream of that age, and almost, in him, a literally accomplished fact. In a famous letter recommending himself to the Duke of Milan, he declares with assurance: "I believe that I could equal any other, as regards works in architecture, both public and private. I can likewise conduct water from one place to an-

other. Furthermore, I can execute works in sculpture, marble, bronze, or terra-cotta. In painting, also, I can do what can be done as well as any other, be he who he may." Already, at the age of thirty, he can say all that with truth, and the passion of curiosity, the rage of patient labour, the progress along all roads to all ends, is to go on without slackening to the time of his death, at only a few years from seventy. But where Leonardo differs from all other seekers after many secrets is in his resolve to master each in turn completely, and not to abandon any one, even after it has been solved. He is the Don Juan of knowledge, who has never forsaken a mistress, and for whom no mistress has been unfruitful.

And the reason of this is that he is moved not by any abstract desire of culture, but by pure curiosity, a quite simple desire of all experience and all beauty. Leonardo's supreme aim was at the perfecting of himself, himself as one of the fine arts. It is for this that he seems to forsake the chief task set before him, that he is content to seem like one who has lost his way: the way is nothing to him; the end and the way are always with him, for he himself is both the end and the way.

"A good painter," said Leonardo, "has two chief objects to paint: man and the intentions of his soul. The former is easy, the latter hard, for it must be expressed by gesture and movements of the limbs." And he says elsewhere: "That figure is not good

which does not express through its gestures the passions of its soul." Thus he becomes, more than any other painter, the painter of the soul. The soul of beautiful women or beautiful youths seemed to become visible to him in a certain smile of the lips and eyes, and in the subtle movement of the wrist and fingers. He has created, not only in the Gioconda, a clairvoyant smile, which is the smile of a mysterious wisdom hidden in things. He paints lips which, if they spoke, could but say, by the mere using of words, some less essential thing, some less intimate secret of the soul. No other painter has, like Leonardo, painted wisdom. What other painters, if they attempt to render, attempt to render by symbols, Leonardo draws, by some enchantment, out of reluctant lips and eyes and hands, and, by the gesture of the body, speaks the passions of the soul.

That "there can be no perfect beauty without some strangeness in the proportion" would have been conceded by Leonardo, who, indeed, advised artists to look for something in nature which is beyond nature, not only in faces and bodies, but in veined marble, in the stains on walls, in the shapes of clouds, and in water and fire. His pictures are disquieting to those not immediately and wholly responsive to them; the eyes of Monna Lisa, as they follow you about the Salon Carré of the Louvre, seem to be asking some seductive and impenetrable question, on which all one's happiness may depend.

In the followers of Leonardo, this almost perverse subtlety of innocence becomes mannered; "pious and sweet, as is their style," to apply a phrase used of Leonardo himself by Isabella d' Este. It is significant that the word which comes first to one's lips in speaking of Leonardo should be the word grace, and not, as with Michelangelo, strength, or, as with Raphael, skill. In Michelangelo, strength frequently becomes grace; in Leonardo, grace itself becomes intensified to something which is beyond the utmost strength. Now the artist should never consciously aim at strength; but, conscious of his strength, he should aim at the utmost subtlety of beauty. Leonardo, in his pictures, as in his precepts, aims at nothing less than perfection; that is, the balance of every quality. Now grace is perfect balance, grace being all that need appear in strength in action.

What I mean will be quite clear if I recall two Greek marbles which I once saw in a private exhibition in London. In one, the head of an old man, strength went as far as strength could go without being changed into some further and higher substance. The truth and energy of this head, gnarled and wry, with its insistence on all the cavities and disgraces of age, on the falling to pieces of the once shapely house of life, are only to be compared, in Greek work, with the drunken old woman in the Glyptothek at Munich, or in modern work, with "La vieille Heaulmière" of Rodin. The drunken woman

is, indeed, a more "furrowing lesson in life," as she sits hugging her wine-jar; you see the rocky shoulder blades, the pits sunk under the collar-bones, the wrinkled hollows under the lifted chin, the nose drawn upwards by the senile movement of the mouth which still thirsts. In the old man, once thought to be Seneca, you have still the restraining force of a will which endures age and pain with gravity. But consider, in this sculptor's work, the point to which strength and the desire of truth have carried it. There is truth and there is strength, and there is the beauty which grows up inevitably out of a sufficiently powerful truth. But let us look across at another head, the head of a woman, which does not seem clever at all; which seems, as one first catches sight of it, curiously simple, as if the difficulties of the art of sculpture had been evaded rather than conquered, yet which ravishes the mind into a certain quiet and fulness of delight. The modelling is nowhere obvious: every outline is smoothed and rounded, nothing leaps out upon one and seizes an unwilling admiration. You do not notice it for strength, for any ingenious mastery of any evident difficulty. Venus rose so out of the waters, when human beauty came consciously into the world, not startling any one, but like a dream which has come true. The forehead and cheeks are no subtler than a flower; the neck, in its breadth from chin to nape, has no refinements upon an actual neck in which one has felt life rather than seen beauty.

The eyes and lips settle down into no fixed expression by which one can remember them; but some infinitely mysterious expression seems to flow through them as through the eyes and lips of a woman's head by Leonardo. And you will see what is not in the other head, the lack of which leaves it where it is: something incalculable, something which begins where truth leaves off, something which transfigures truth.

And I am not sure that you will not find this something in the bronze of "La vieille Heaulmière" in the Luxembourg Gallery. Wasted, ruinous, "lean, wizen, like a small dry tree," this piteous body remembers the body it had when it was young, and the beauty is still there, in the lovely skeleton that shows right through the flesh, in the delicate contours of the almost hairless head, in the indestructible grace of the profile. This "poor old light woman" is more tragic than the old drunken woman of the Munich Gallery; but, as one looks at the old drunken woman, one sees only the sordid pity of things as they are, while "La vieille Heaulmière" is saying "Thus endeth all the beauty of us," as it can be said only by those who have fastened "the sweet yoke" of beauty upon the necks of the world.

Our time is the time in which men seem to themselves to have first discovered the beauty of ugly and of common things. There is a whole modern literature, and there is a whole modern art, and even music, in which men have set themselves to be ugly

with intention, as they once set themselves to the more difficult achievement of beauty. They forget that there is nothing so twisted in nature or in men's brains that has not been drawn by some Eastern weaver of patterns, or carved by some Western ape of life. What all but a few men of genius have forgotten in all ages is that beauty is in no literal rendering of anything, Venus or the satyr; but may wash like a flood of air over either Venus or the satyr, making either beautiful. It is enough to compare any grotesque and evil head in the best of Beardsley's drawings with Leonardo's head of Judas in the Windsor Library, or with one of those bitter and malevolent heads full of insane fury and the energy of the beasts, which he scattered over the pages of his sketch-book. These have a beauty not less restrained, in its poised and perfected violence, than the beauty of mysterious peace which broods over the "Virgin of the Rocks." To Beardsley the thing drawn must remain ugly through all the beauty of the drawing, and must hurt. The sculptor of the woman's head, if he had done the head of the old man, would have lost nothing that is characteristic in the grimace of eyes and mouth, but he would have touched it with I know not what magic in his fingers, and it would have ravished us, like the other, into some quiet heaven of delight.

Then, in this transfiguring art of Leonardo, there is, in every picture, not only a thing of perfectly achieved beauty, but a new thing. We see him,

before every one else, inventing landscape, inventing a whole new movement for an equestrian statue; inventing the first wholly simple and natural treatment of the Virgin and Child; inventing, in the Gioconda, a new art of portrait-painting, in which a woman's soul is, for the first time, seen smiling. He was content to do nothing as it had been done before, as he was content to do nothing without perfection.

"It is thought," said the Carmelite, "that he lives only for the day." Leonardo has the patience of one who, instigated by continual inspiration, knows that inspiration is an impulse, not an accomplishment. More than others, he waited on it, yet without abandoning himself to a too confident repose in its first promptings. It was part of his genius to know how to leave off working and how to return to work. He gives you in a picture nothing but inspiration, because he fills up the inevitable gaps and intervals by a calculated absence, and the achievement of other tasks. He returns to his idea again and again, as his sketches show us, supplementing inspiration by a finer inspiration; never weary, yet never perhaps satisfied. As he achieved more than others so he desired more; and in the most eloquent words which he wrote he has said an epilogue over the passing of all earthly beauty "O Time! consumer of all things; O envious age! thou dost destroy all things and devour all things with the relentless teeth of years, little by little, in a slow

death. Helen, when she looked in her mirror, seeing the withered wrinkles made in her face by old age, wept and wondered why she had twice been carried away."

III. A TRIUMPH OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI

While Leonardo was thus pitying the fate of men and women in the old age of Helen, and saying, for his own comfort, that "lovely mortal things pass, but not art," Florence was rejoicing, with only momentary after-thoughts, in its newly awakened consciousness of what could be done to colour and inspirit life, day by day, in an existence lived after what seemed to be the blithe Greek pattern. It was Lorenzo de' Medici who gave the liveliest utterance to this new Paganism and set down most definitely, in a lovely form, for a "Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne," no doubt charioted gallantly through the streets, the conclusion of the age. His verses, which I have translated very literally, mark a stage, and are a necessary part, of my interpretation of Florence.

What a lovely thing this Youth is,
If but Youth would always stay so!
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

Here is Bacchus, and beside him
Ariadne, lovely, loving;
Time flies, yet, although they chide him,
Their love moves not with his moving.
Nymphs and fauns and all folk roving
Are for ever blithe and gay so.
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

All these little jolly satyrs,
Following on the nymphs to find them,
Have in forests and in caverns
Laid a hundred snares to bind them;
Heats of Bacchus urge and blind them
Till they dance and leap astray so.
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

And the little nymphs are grateful
By their satyrs to be singled;
Who, that is not foul and hateful,
Would put out a fire Love kindled?
All together, mixed and mingled,
Feast their youth and years away so.
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

Next Silenus follows, sunken
On the ass's back, a burthen;
He is gay and old and drunken,
Years of fatness bind his girth in,

Heaping loads of wine and mirth in,
Till he can but laugh and sway so.
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

Midas follows, and his seizure
Turns to gold all things created.
But what pleasure to have treasure
When desire is unabated?
With what water shall be sated
Thirst no sweetness can allay so?
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

Open ears wide, every creature:
None can count upon to-morrow,
But to-day we all and each are
Ready, old and young, to borrow
Present joy from coming sorrow.
Feast our youth and years away so!
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

Youths and maidens, every lover,
Long live love and long live Bacchus!
When the song and dance are over,
Though love's burning sweetness rack us,
Toil and care shall never track us.
That which must be shall be aye so.
You'd be happy? be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.
What a lovely thing this Youth is,
If but Youth would always stay so!

IV. DANTE AND BOTTICELLI

The earlier work of Botticelli is like an illustration of that characteristically Renaissance ideal of the painter which we find developed throughout the whole of Leon Battista Alberti's book on painting; and it is in this book that the story of the "Calumny of Apelles" is related, as a subject for painters, precisely as Botticelli was to paint it. To Alberti's theories we must add that new poetry, with its ancient symbolism and its fresh Spring graces, which was being written by Poliziano and by Lorenzo de' Medici. There is little doubt that in the so-called "Mars and Venus" of the National Gallery we have a composition suggested by the "Stanze per la Giostra" of Poliziano, in which Giuliano de' Medici and la bella Simonetta are commemorated; and the "Primavera" has sometimes been taken to be an illustration of another of his poems, though indeed it sums up in a visible image the whole Spring poetry of the Renaissance. All this poetry, like all Botticelli's earlier work, is a literal new birth of Paganism; and Botticelli captures the Greek spirit, not, as Raphael did, by an ardent scholarship, seizing upon the actual forms and the supposed "classic" feeling of Greek sculpture, of the "Three Graces" for instance, in the Cathedral Library at Siena, but by creating a new antiquity of his own over again in Florence, putting his town folk in holiday attire into it, and seeing Simonetta as a Tangara, unconsciously. The

youth of Greece came back to him by an accidental relationship of the eyes and hand, and by a genius for interpreting slight hints, and re-creating them in a new, fantastic, or fanciful way of his own. He has the secret of the Greek rhythm, and nothing in his feeling comes to break or disturb that rhythm. Whether he paints the birth of Venus or of Christ, he has the same indifference and curiosity: each is a picture to him. The pensive unconcern, what looks like weariness or vague trouble, in the face of the Virgin, is not so conscious a thinking into it of such speculations as Pater finds there (and finds, for us if not for Botticelli, rightly), but an expression chosen for its charm, its melancholy grace, by one who gave it equally to Venus rising sadly out of the waves, and to the Virgin enthroned and indifferent among angels, or holding her child like an idle or heavy toy. Judith going home through the midst of her enemies, with the sword and olive-branch in her hand, Truth in the "Calumny," Simonetta in the picture in London, have all the same look of exquisite weariness, as of those who do or endure great things in a dream, and are all hypnotised by the same meditation, which is really the soul of their visible beauty. And Botticelli sets gravity and sadness in their eyes and lips as he sets jewels of gold on the dress, and curls the hair into curves lovelier than the curves of shells.

Vasari tells us that under the influence of Savonarola Botticelli for a time "totally abandoned

painting." In the "Nativity" in the National Gallery we see the effect of that influence upon his art when he went back to it. The Christian convention, which he had accepted as a part of his design just as he accepted the convention of the Venus de Medici for his own Venus, is wholly abandoned; for he has now a new, personal, fantastical interest in the thing itself, and in his own apocalyptic interpretation of it; he invents a new form, in which the suavity is replaced by an ecstasy, and men and angels meet and embrace with uncontrollable emotion, and little devils from Hell hide like snakes among the clefts of the rocks. A new quality has come into his work, troubling it, and giving it a new, restless beauty, certainly Christian at last. His design hardens, losing something of its decorative beauty; the rhythm contracts, the pensive expression in the faces becomes a personal trouble; and in the "Pietà" at Munich (if it is really his) there is almost the grimace of over-strung emotion, as in the S. Zenobio panels there is a hurry of movement which is almost feverish.

It is in this later, mystical period that most writers have preferred to place the greater part of Botticelli's drawings to the "Divine Comedy," and some have even imagined him to have been occupied on them to the very end of his life, during those last years which may not have been so dejected, as we know now that they were not so long drawn out, as Vasari has said. Savonarola did not come to

Florence till 1482, and there can be little doubt that Botticelli had begun his drawings before 1481, though in that year he must, for a time, have laid them aside, to paint the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. In 1481 an edition of Dante was published at Florence by Christoforo Landino, containing, in addition to his commentary, a number of engravings, varying in different copies from two to twenty. These engravings, clumsily and badly done as they are, we now know to have been done by some inferior craftsman who had seen, and who tried to imitate, Botticelli's earlier designs to the "Inferno." They end with the nineteenth canto; and, as the book appeared in August, 1481, and we know that Botticelli went to Rome early in that year, it would appear that he had got so far, and no further, with his drawings, and that the printer could not wait for his return. Their chief value for us is that they give us, in their prints to the eight cantos of the "Inferno" for which Botticelli's drawings are missing, some faint, fragmentary, and distorted idea of what those designs may have been.

The first edition of Dante's "Divine Comedy" was printed in 1472, but manuscript copies still continued to be made for rich collectors, who would have been ashamed to possess so renowned a book in any less costly and beautiful a shape. We know from an anonymous manuscript of the tenth century, in the National Library at Florence, that Botticelli

"painted and pictured a Dante on parchment for Lorenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici, which was accounted a marvellous thing." Of this Lorenzo, who died in 1503, we know also that he commissioned a youthful statue of John the Baptist from Michelangelo. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the drawings of Botticelli were known to exist in the collection of the Duke of Hamilton. At the Hamilton sale in 1882 they were bought by the Berlin Museum. There are eighty-eight sheets of parchment, one of which is double, and contains a single design; three sheets contain no design. The text is written on one side of the parchment, in six columns, each sheet containing a whole canto; and on the other side the designs are sketched with silver-point, and finished in black or brown ink: each design faces the canto which it illustrates. A single page ("Inferno," xviii.) is painted in body-colour. Seven more sheets, containing eight more drawings belonging to the same series, were afterwards discovered in the Vatican Library: the chart of Hell, the illustration to canto i., drawn on either side of the same sheet, and the illustrations to cantos ix., x., xii., xiii., xv., and xvi. of the "Inferno." Two of these sheets are wholly, and one partly, coloured, as if in imitation of the illuminated manuscripts of the time. No texts or designs have been found to cantos ii. to vii., or xi. and xiv., of the "Inferno"; of canto xxxi.

of the "Paradiso" there is only the text; the drawing for canto xxxii. is scarcely begun, and there is neither text nor drawing for the last canto.[1]

The earlier designs, most indeed of those to the "Inferno," are more crowded, more literal and exact in their following of every detail, more casually composed, in their setting of a series of episodes layer above layer, than the later ones; and it is only as he moves upward from Hell through Purgatory to Heaven that Botticelli becomes wholly master of his material, wholly himself. Vasari tells us that, after painting the frescoes at Rome, he squandered "the considerable sum of money" which he had had from the Pope, and "returned at once to Florence, where, being whimsical and eccentric, he occupied himself with commenting on a certain part of Dante, illustrating the "Inferno," and executing prints, over which he wasted much time, and, neglecting his proper occupation, he did no work, and thereby caused infinite disorder in his affairs." We may thus reasonably suppose that the drawings begun before 1481 were continued within the course of the next year or two; and nothing is more likely than that the work was continued, at intervals, during many years. Yet I see no reason for supposing that any part of it was done after the fatal

[1] A facsimile reproduction of all the drawings has been published in folio, under the care of Dr. F. Lippmann, by G. Grote, Berlin (1887), and, reduced to half the size of the originals, by Lawrence and Bullen (1896), with an introduction and commentary by the same editor, and slightly reduced facsimiles of the twenty engravings of 1481.

influence of Savonarola had drawn the painter out of his sufficing artificial paradise into the regions of "the Second Woe of the Apocalypse." Is there, in any part of the drawings, a suggestion of that harder later technique which we find in the "Nativity" of 1500, or of the harsh energy which we find in the S. Zenobio panels? Is there, in the faithful and literal record of Dante's poem, with its simple acceptance of fact and its more and more gracious economy of line, any of the later Christian feeling, grown sad, painful, and acute, the sort of fanaticism which he seems to have caught from Savonarola, and implanted in his latest pictures? I think not: though I think I can see, in this ardent study of Dante, one of the ways leading Botticelli to Savonarola.

To an artist of the Renaissance the Hell and Purgatory of Dante would be infinitely more difficult to illustrate than those subjects of ancient mythology which had their own classic conventions. The Hell of the Campo Santo and of the mediæval illuminators would seem to him a convention not yet consecrated by tradition, and without any pictorial probability to his own mind. He could but draw literally, following Dante's words without seeing his pictures through the same fierce and minute ecstasy of imagination. Has any Italian painter really had a fine sense of the grotesque? Probably Michelangelo, in those priceless drawings which went down in the ship off Civitavecchia, put

sublimity into Dante, as Blake has done in our own age, and by a method of interpretation perhaps not wholly different. But is Dante really sublime in the Miltonic sense, or in the sense in which some of Blake's drawings are sublime? I do not feel that he is. His imagination is severe, precise, definite; he sees in hard outline, by flashes, certainly, but without any of the heightening of atmosphere. The vision of Milton is a kind of second sight, perhaps a blind man's pageant of "men as trees walking"; Shakespeare too sees in metaphors, through the suggestion of words, in their subtle colouring of outline; but to Dante everything is in profile, and his words are always as if graven in the white marble which he saw in Purgatory,

"Come figura in cera si sugella."

Thus I think that when Botticelli is at his best, and when he allows himself room to be quite clear, and does not try to put a whole canto into a single design, the form in which he renders Dante is really the form in which Dante should be rendered. The "Inferno" he is not always able to turn into beautiful shapes, because of what Pater has noticed, "that the words of a poet, which only feebly present an image to the mind, must be lowered in key when translated into form"; but in much of the "Purgatorio" and most of the "Paradiso" there is little but his piety or fidelity to hinder him. The almost monkish piety with which he follows his sacred text, not daring to put his own private interpretation in

the place of a strictly literal, an orthodox one, is like that of a missal-painter, decorating verse after verse of the Scriptures, as if actually in the margins of his text; with a monk's patience also, but with a quite Pagan sense of beauty, a lyrical quality of design, which was wholly typical of the Renaissance. It is perhaps in his character of the pious monk, working for the glory of God on his missal, that he writes in minute letters on the banner of one of his young angels, in his drawing of the nine heavenly orders, each with its name written in the margin, his own name, "Sandro di Mariano," as if numbering his place among them before the time.

Botticelli's Hell, like Dante's, is a place of gross physical torture, in which the Devil is exactly as Dante saw him, a child's ideal of horror, with his three Gargantuan heads each "champing a sinner" between its separate fangs. The beauty which comes into even this design comes by a skill of hand which draws lovely lines for the articulations of the fingers and of the bats' wings. There is rarely a beauty wholly appropriate to the subject, and directly conditioned by it, but rather a struggle between the nature of the task and the means used to turn it into a picture. Sometimes, as in the illustration to canto xxii., decoration comes into the design with the barbed spears and bats' wings of devils, and the grouping of the tormented figures and their tormentors, and the lonely line of soothsayers pacing at the edge of the chasm above the

lake. Coiled snakes twist and voyage across certain designs in intricate arabesques, and Geryon has a kind of morbid elegance in his curved scales, and there are two very decorative pages ornamented with nothing but spiring flames. But there are others which struggle confusedly with horror, or are a kind of map, or algebraical signs; and there is no intimacy or subtlety in their rendering of the evil powers of nature, nothing that does not lose rather than gain from its subject, and no accidental beauty that would not be more in keeping with either Purgatory or Paradise.

With the "Purgatorio" Dante leaves more room to his illustrator, and Botticelli gradually ceases to be the slave of his text. Occasionally he takes a casual word very literally, as in the eighteenth canto, where he sets all the slothful biting at their own flesh. But in the next canto he shrinks from rendering the horrible details of the Siren, "quella antica strega," as he would certainly have done, with careful fidelity, in the "Inferno." In at least one design, the fifteenth, he has frankly continued his own rendering of a scene, without going on with Dante's continuation of it; and the design which he repeats, with changes, is, in its first form, as an illustration to the fourteenth canto, one of the subtlest and most emotional of them all, with something, in the row of blind beggars huddled against the rocks, of the emotional quality of Blake. He is not always careful to take the opportunities that

Dante gives him; and thus, in the second canto, Casella is only the most robust of a number of naked shapes; in the fifth, la Pia is uncommemorated, though the design has many figures, and we remember that canto only for her few lines; and Rachel and Leah are not to be seen in the twenty-seventh, though the twenty-eighth is wholly given up to Matilda gathering flowers in Eden, and is one of the most beautiful of all the designs, in its almost Japanese arrangement, between the straight tree-trunks. There is spiritual meaning, as well as gracious arabesque, in the beautiful bodies of those who have sinned through love, and now strive to re-embrace among the flames; and a loveliness of line which is itself its own sufficient meaning in the two nudes of canto iv., one seated, with his arms about his knees, and the other turning slowly in the foreground, and in the nude figure in the seventh canto seated with his back to the hollow of the valley where the spirits of kings rest on the grass. In all these there is that delight in the beauty of bodies which is so Greek in Botticelli, and in the elaborate design in many compartments which illustrates canto x. there is more of his delight in moving draperies, and people dancing, and straight lances, and the crowd and trampling of horsemen, and a spirit like the Pagan or Renaissance spirit of the "Birth of Venus" or the "Spring." It is in the series of "triumphs" in which he realises, exactly as Dante had planned it, but with what pictorial ecstasy, the pageant of the Car of

Beatrice, that we see his design most triumphant, most characteristically his own. Is not the first perhaps the finest in its simplicity, its sweep of design: the lower curve of the river Lethe like a floating pennant, and the upper curves of the seven pennants of smoke blown back and carried round from the seven candlesticks borne by angels? And yet is not the second more splendid, more sumptuous, in its immensely rich and intricate network of decoration, woven with precise and delicate detail into a texture and pattern seen as clearly and as rapturously as Dante's?

In his vision of the Car of Beatrice Dante's imagery is, as Botticelli's design proves to us, marvellously pictorial. For the most part what may be called his larger imagery is mediæval, and, though distinctly visualised, has much of the mediæval uncouthness; as, for instance, in the eagle of canto xx. of the "Paradiso," made up of so many saints, five to the arch of the eyebrow. His smaller imagery, all those similes by which he shows us the reflection before we see the thing, have on the contrary a homely naturalness which sets us wondering afterwards how so simple a statement of fact can have turned into such great poetry. Think of all that poets have said about night, and then hear Dante:

"La notte che le cose ci nasconde"

"Night that hides things from us." While both Milton and Shakespeare are constantly saying things

for effect, and letting them dazzle us, Dante's style requires no heightening, no matter what he has to say, and it is on the same level of speech that he writes, of the church bells,

"Tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota"

and, of the ineffable vision of the Virgin ensapphiring brightest heaven with lovely sapphire,

"Onde si coronova il bel zaffiro
Del quale il ciel più chiaro s'inzaffira"

It is always by their little details, the details that make things clear to the sight, that he names them; as, when Matilda looks up from the flowers she is gathering, he says of her that she turned "like a lady dancing, who turns with the soles of her feet close to the ground, and scarcely sets foot before foot." How beautiful that is in drawing, how like Botticelli, who, though he does not illustrate exactly that attitude, might seem to remember the words when, in the fifth canto of the "Paradiso," he draws the naked feet of Beatrice, set delicately together, like a pigeon's preparing to alight. And it is in the "Paradiso" chiefly that Botticelli seems to melt into the very spirit of Dante, purifying it, sometimes, of those "corollaries" and "deductions" which are apt to turn heaven into a wrangling hell of the schoolmen.

Throughout the main part of the "Paradiso" Botticelli gives us, in his designs, only two figures, Dante and Beatrice, whether because he did not finish his drawings, or whether, as I would rather

think, he saw that the main significance of the book is concentrated upon the celestial relations of Dante and Beatrice, now at once actual and lyrical. And so he gives us circle after circle with only these two figures, sometimes set into a sky of starry flames, sometimes detached against mere emptiness of light; disregarding incidents or persons who, in the poem, break a little upon its divine monotony. Even Cunizza in the amorous sphere is only seen in the half-closed eyes of Dante under the light of her presence, and in his hand uplifted in joyous surprise. And in the circle of the sun he does but shield his eyes against overpowering light, not seeing S. Thomas Aquinas and the other doctors of the Church. Even the birds who make D and I and L with their flight, and the M of wings twined with lilies, do not tempt Botticelli out of his reticence. But every motion of the soul and speech of Dante and Beatrice is rendered with subtle fidelity in some gesture, some turn of the head or hands, some lifting of the eyelids or parting of the lips, with a restraint like Dante's, and like no other gesture in Italian poetry or painting. Think of Italian gesture, even of Leonardo's in the "Last Supper." In every canto Botticelli makes a new marvel of the folds of Beatrice's robe; every movement is studied so as to set the lines into some new arrangement, in which, as in "Venus" and the "Spring," hands and feet and hair have their part in the rhythm.

Like a pearl on a white forehead, or the reflection

of faces seen in clear water: it is Dante's image for the aspect of certain spiritual realities as they come to him in one of the circles of Heaven, and Botticelli has drawn many of these designs to the "Paradiso," and some among the more elaborate ones which begin with the twenty-first canto, with just such faintness and precision. There are delicious *naïvetés*, as in the second head which grows on Dante's shoulders, looking backwards, because in the poem he turns; and in the face of Beatrice, which is changed into a tragic mask, where, in the poem, she refrains from smiling, lest the radiance of the seventh heaven, drawn into her eyes, should shrivel Dante into ashes. In this design, that of Jacob's ladder, there is a whirl of baby angels like flowers or birds (the daws of Dante's simile), in which little bodies drunk with light fly exquisitely, as birds do, turning upon themselves in the air in their vehemence of delight. And Botticelli has repeated this note of rapture in his last almost completed design, where we see the river of light, its banks "painted with marvellous Spring," and the "living sparks," like winged infants, plunging head foremost into the blossoms, and then whirling, drunk with odours, into the river out of the "smiling of the grasses."

In Botticelli's fidelity to Dante I find something of Dante's fidelity to nature, and with the same exquisitely personal art. Only Wordsworth, occasionally, among poets, gets the inevitable magic of a statement which is at once completely truthful

and completely beautiful: Dante gets it in almost every statement. Wordsworth's line, spoken of Milton:

"Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."

might render the essence and secret of Dante, as a writer of verse, better than most translations of his whole poem. And in Botticelli we find a minutely beautiful truth like that of Dante, and in his choice of pure outline to convey Dante's vision a choice wholly appropriate. Reading Dante over again, canto by canto, and turning from the poem to the drawings, I find Dante more beautiful, seeing him through Botticelli's eyes, and I find in Botticelli a beauty wholly his own, a creation comparable with Dante's, in an art which Dante envied.

RAVENNA

RAVENNA

I

Entering Ravenna, I seemed to be pentrating into emptiness. Here not a house seems alive; there is an odour in the air which is like the smell of earth or of graves; the people shiver in the streets, or walk muffled to the mouth in ample cloth cloaks with collars of fur; there is a feverish red in the hollow cheeks, and a brightness of fever in the eyes. After Venice, where I had seen strong and comfortable men, naked to the waist, carrying heavy burdens between the wharves and the ships, one seemed to have come into a city of sick people. And the city, too, is as if worn out, languid with fever; it has not aged gracefully. Its miraculous mosaics, so nearly unaging, are housed inside rough walls, through which the damp creeps, staining the marble columns with strange, lovely colours of decay. The streets are chill, narrow corridors for the wind; earth-coloured, left to accumulate the natural dinginess of things. Here and there a great basilica, a tower, the fragment of an ancient palace, stands up in the corner of an empty piazza or rises out of a cluster of dull-brown roofs. The Cathedral square is half overgrown with grass; grass

grows up the six steps in front of the one old and solid house there; all around the red plaster is peeling off the walls; through two of the five roads which lead out of the square you see the green and brown of trees and the dingy beginnings of the city wall.

On market-day Ravenna awakens for a whole morning. The people come in great numbers through all the gates of the city, on foot, and in their tiny carts slung together with netted string. The Piazza Vittorio Emanuele is thronged with rough, red, wrinkled peasants, muffled in their great cloaks, and in the Piazza Dante Alighieri, which opens out of it, there is a sort of small fair. Stalls are set up all over the rocky ground; cloths of bright colour, especially certain fiery yellows and reds, are heaped upon them; they hang in strips, blazing in the midst of dull hanks of hemp, of wooden utensils, of earthenware, of beaten copper. Women with bright handkerchiefs over their heads, with something red always in kerchief or bodice, stand at the stalls; there is a slow heaving of people to and fro in the square. The women who pass have serious yet slightly ironical faces, sometimes with that steady, ambiguous look which one sees in the Jewess and in the gipsy. They hold themselves proudly, like conscious animals, differing (how strangely!) from the Venetians, their neighbours, who are unconscious animals. It is all a little sombre and feverish; there is no gaiety, no lightness, but rather something serious, almost uneasy, in the watchful aspect of the people.

II

All life forsakes Ravenna, which lives on with an unholy charm, like one really dead, kept in a semblance of life by witchcraft. The sea has ebbed from it, life has ebbed out of it, splendour and power have forsaken it; it remains the lovely and unhappy ghost of itself. The streets themselves are as if cut out of the ground: they have the colour and chill feeling of the earth; the sun rarely soaks into them: one seems to be walking in a city dug up out of ruins. There is a strange, shivering silence everywhere; in these roughly paved streets on which there is so rarely a sound of wheels or of footsteps; in these vast and solid houses, from behind whose bars and shutters so few faces look out; in these empty squares, these sumptuous churches with closed doors, opened for curious strangers; these great gateways shutting in the city upon itself. And light, when it comes into the city, is itself disquieting. Sometimes, after a day's resignation or dull waiting, Ravenna begins to awaken, like a convalescent, as the afternoon brightens towards sunset. Seen from the walls the colours of the sky seem to soak down upon the city; it flushes, seems to respond to the light. Standing in the Piazza Byron at sunset, one sees the red walls of the Church of S. Francesco, as if flaming against a sky from which the fires of sunset are reflected; every leaf of the little tree that stands in the corner of the square burns with a separate

flame, and the red glow extends to the tomb of Braccioforte, where Dante lies buried among the sarcophagi.

Ravenna is full of ancient monuments which seem to last on, after so unthinkably many centuries, like very old people, blind and deaf and feeble in hands and feet, who still sit by the hearth of their old homes, dressed in ancient finery, and tolerating the youth of the world with an impeccable courtesy. They frighten the younger people a little, who feel their own flimsy modernness, and a youth which is not likely to grow distinguished, as they consider the ghastly beauty of their ancestors.

In Ravenna there are the tombs of all the ages: sarcophagi of the early martyrs of the Church, the sepulchre of Theodoric, King of the Goths, the tomb of Dante. Has any structure in which people were to live ever lasted so long as those in which for so much longer (as, in their wisdom, they realised) they were to lie dead? There are only a few arches and a few broken walls left of the palace of Theodoric, but the tomb of Theodoric still stands, with its impregnable walls, its roof of a single slab of Istrian granite, solid as a prison, like a work of Titans. And, everywhere, with a strange and lovely placidity, which seems natural and at home only in Ravenna, there are the sarcophagi of stone and marble, in churches and museums, around the tomb of Dante, and, once only, though empty, in the mausoleum which was built to cover it; the vast and rocky

sarcophagus of Galla Placidia. They are a part of the place, beautiful and formidable and peaceful remembrances of death. Death here becomes as beautiful and durable a thing as any other form of what is elsewhere fleeting in human things. There is something terrifying in the eternity of form, colour, substance; in Ravenna nothing is lost, everything lasts on, and may sometimes be thought to wish, and be unable, to fade out, or even to grow old visibly.

III

Lean and ascetic Ravenna has a certain exquisite rigidity in its charm, like that of a crucifix, like that of the strange, severe, and sumptuous crucifix of engraved silver discs in the Cathedral. The streets are long and straight, with sharp angles, rarely a curve: you can look half way across the city, and see the light through any one of its great gateways. And the houses are almost all flat; they are large, severe, with iron bars over the lower windows; they have rarely a balcony or any exterior decoration. The houses of the Polentas or of the Traversari are only distinguished from the later buildings by a finer severity, by a few rigid cornices or lintels, and by a more heavily resistant way of leaning back from a base solidly planted in the earth. The very ruins, the ruins of the palace of Theodoric, for instance, form level lines with the street, and bring no disturbing picturesqueness into the pattern.

And, in all this, there is a form of charm as inherent as in the severe art of mosaic. In Ravenna mosaic obtains a quality hardly known elsewhere, a quality of softness, almost a diaphanous quality. The colours of mosaic in Venice are the colours of Venetian water, as it is stained by clouds and by the hard bright reflections of things: Venetian mosaic is water turned to stone. But in Ravenna its colours are those of the sky above them. I have seen, at sunset, a sky in which I could distinguish the exact shades of colour, certain purples and reds and bluish yellows, which I had seen in the mosaics of S. Vitale, in the birds and beasts and fruits in the central roof of the choir there. I have seen, at sunset, the subtlest green of S. Apollinare in Classe, the malachite and lapis lazuli of the Baptistery of the Orthodox, alive and momentary in the sky above Ravenna.

Ravenna is a city clothed in hard substances: marble, and the metallic brightness of mosaic. And these hard substances have become ductile and luminous, a garment of Oriental stuffs and jewels, coloured in infinite gradations. Its splendour is sepulchral, and to walk in it is to walk in a buried city, where the earth has been heaped for centuries over rich treasures, never quite lost, nor ever wholly recovered. To enter S. Vitale is like entering an excavation, and one has almost the sensation that these columns of white marble, with their exquisite and severe capitals, so precise and delicate, these veined marbles which paint the walls, these domes

and arches over which fields and skies of mosaic flame and blossom, are now being dug up out of the earth. Everywhere there is a covering of rough red brick, a mere shell, over these temples, which are still, after the devastations of fourteen hundred years, the most royal palaces built for God and the saints.

Sigismondo Malatesta stripped the marble from the walls of S. Apollinare in Classe, but the twenty-four columns of greyish-white marble, resting on their square, carved, white marble bases, still stand in their place, twelve on either side, and lead up to the broad circular steps of the tribuna, where, in the dome, colour begins. If the mosaics of the nave of S. Apollinare Nuovo could but be transferred to the walls of the nave of S. Apollinare in Classe, we should have, under one roof, an all but perfect sixth-century basilica, clothed in colours as flaming and imperishable as jewels. In the choir of S. Vitale there is a column of green marble veined with more colours than I have ever seen in marble: agate, porphyry, malachite, and I know not how many other precious substances. Looked at against the light it is like a great mottled green snake, dully alive, and standing rigid. Overhead, in the dome, there is a sky which is like the neck of a peacock, flowered over with patterns of leaves and beasts and birds, in the fixed, fiery, and gentle illumination of mosaic.

It is always the green of grass and the blue of the sky that are burnt into these coloured spaces like

flames. And, as one might remember certain flowers among the flowers of a great garden, or certain jewels from a cabinet of jewels, I remember chiefly, and with most of separate pleasure, the gold stars on the blue nocturnal sky of the dome of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia; the birds of all species and all colours, the ducks and hens, among red disks, trefoliated outwards in white, which make the inner ceiling of the Cappella di S. Pier Crisologo; the lapis lazuli which makes a sky in the dome of the Baptistery, against which the twelve Apostles walk in gold and white robes, with jewelled crowns in their hands, and the green grass, on which a shadow turns and darkens with their feet, as the circle goes round with the sun; the smooth green carpet of grass in the heavenly meadow which curtains the whole dome of S. Apollinare in Classe like a sky; the peacocks at the four corners of the roof of the tribuna of S. Vitale, and the globes of burning blue under the feet of the four angels who point to the central Lamb; and, in S. Apollinare Nuovo, the Eastern shawls and jewels and the points of the red slippers of the women who carry crowns to the Virgin, and the white and gold curtains looped back from the windows of the royal palace of Ravenna.

IV

But, in Ravenna, there is another charm besides this visible one. It is to be loved for its sternness,

the barriers to its beauty, what is tragic and unyielding in it, its still and silent attitude of fixed meditation and remembrance, its stoniness, its mists and winter colour, its reticent, unwilling, and mysterious response to a mood of the sky or of the hour. It broods among memories, forgetting nothing. The heroic and unhappy Queen Galla Placidia has still her place there, outside her mausoleum, empty now of all but the beauty which she created about her, fifteen centuries ago. The peasants, as they pass the rocky tomb standing in the midst of fields, with its two bushes of pampas-grass, like two lamps burning with white flame, before it, speak of Theodoric the Goth, as of a king against whom Garibaldi might have led them. One still sees, in the mosaic of the choir of S. Vitale, the insatiable eyes of the Empress Theodora, as she stands, tall and royally draped and crowned with pearls, offering a cup of gold to the throned Christ. In the church of S. Maria in Porto Fuori, which rises with its great square tower out of a farmyard in a field, one still sees, among the half-ruined frescoes with their colours of pale rose, the calm and eager face of Francesca da Rimini: the bright gold hair wreathed with green leaves, the long neck, the long sensitive hands, the long straight line of nose and forehead, and the wide-open eye, looking down from an open window, as if for the first sight of Paolo. The cottage woman who opened the church door for me spoke with an easy, smiling, and respectful familiarity of

Francesca and of Peter the Sinner, the Blessed Pietro degli Onesti who built the church in 1096. A peasant whom I met in the Pineta said to me: "Have you seen Dante's Walk, under the trees by the canal? He used to walk there in the evenings, studying." He said it as if his grandfather had met Dante walking there.

Ravenna is full of Dante. His tomb, inscribed

"Dantis Poetae Sepulchrum,"

is railed in with the eleven early Christian sarcophagi of the "Sepolcreto di Braccioforte," and with certain tablets to Mazzini hung with wreaths of dry leaves. It is in the earliest of these sarcophagi that d'Annunzio has planted a rose-tree in the first act of "Francesca da Rimini," where Francesca walks round it in the court of her father's house, and touches the carvings on the four sides, and says, as she touches each in order:

"The Redeemer treads
Under his feet the lion and the snake;
Mary saluted Elizabeth;
Our Lady, and the angel bids 'All hail!'
The stags are drinking at the running brook."

By the side of the tomb is the house, its windows bricked up, but the tall brown wall still solid, where, as the tablet tells you, Dante was the guest of Guido da Polenta: "Questa casa fu un tempo dei Polentani, che ebbero la gloria di accogliere ospitalmente Dante Alighieri." On an old red wall overlooking the public gardens near the station there

is another tablet: "Beatrice, figliuola di Dante Alighieri, in questo cenobio di Santo Stefano degli Olivi si votò a Dio, indegnata delle nequizie del mondo, visto da una rea fazione di cittadini dannato il padre a perpetuo esilio e mendico ire in cerca dell'altrui pane" (Beatrice, daughter of Dante Alighieri, in this convent of Santo Stefano degli Olivi, devoted herself to God, wroth with the world's wickedness, having seen her father, through the evil dissension of citizens, condemned to perpetual exile, and to become a beggar for the bread of strangers).

After Dante, Byron is still the great presence in Ravenna. The hotel which bears his name was the palace of the Guiccioli, and Byron lived there, as *cavalier servente* of the Countess, from June, 1819, to October, 1821. Across the square, now the Piazza Byron, is the Café Byron, and an inscription over the door tells us that Byron, when he first came to Ravenna, chose to live in this house because it was near the tomb of Dante. The tablet calls him "splendore del secolo decimonono." In the street opposite there is a little curiosity-shop, and one afternoon, as I was looking vainly around the shelves, the shopkeeper put on an air of mystery, and called me into a corner, while he unlocked a drawer and took out a piece of yellowing paper. It was a draft of £500 made out to Byron's credit in 1821, and signed by him, in his unmistakable handwriting, on the stamped paper of the period. The

old man told me with pride that his mother had been educated in the same convent with Byron's daughter, the Convent of S. Francesco, across the way; they had been great friends, he said.

V

In the country about Ravenna there is a luxurious harshness. The bank of wall on which you may walk round the city looks outwards over wide, flat, marshy plains, and, as far as you can see, the plains broaden, set with thin trees, which I saw desolately shedding their last leaves, on a day late in November. There was a faint mist; the air was damp and cold. Straight roads, going between narrow alleys of these thin and almost leafless trees, stretched across the plain with a dusty monotony. Dry stalks rattled in the fields, beyond hedges of faded green and yellow bushes; field after field lay in long narrow strips, side by side, colour by colour, dull greens and browns, spotted by sudden gleams of autumn colouring; with here and there a garden of white chrysanthemums, a garden of vegetables surrounded by trellised vines, or a plot of weedy grass, with fruit trees around it. White bullocks passed on the roads, dragging primitive carts of singular shape, painted all over with pictures in bright colours. Here and there women worked with bare feet in the fields; old men scraped together the fallen leaves out of the ditches; small black donkeys

waited for their little carts to be filled. In the air, the feeling of the earth; in all these gestures, in the colour of the day, in the attitude of Ravenna, heaped there so like a funeral monument, I felt the winter.

Between Ravenna and the sea the land is almost half water. Marshes lie on each side of the narrow path by the canal, and the canal turns aside into many creeks and channels, with rushy mud banks around them, and, beyond, pools of water with brown reedy grass growing up out of it. The land is flat to the horizon, dull brown or green where there is not the glitter of water, bright white, or blue like lapis lazuli. In the distance thin lines of stone-pines stand up against the sky; here and there, not far from the road, the pines cluster; on the left, beyond the canal and the moorland, there is the dense wall of the Pineta, green-black above, with shadowy tints of lavender about the stems. Along the canal men are fishing with strange nets hoisted on cranes, like vast insects with endless tentacles, two reaching forwards and two backwards, webbed with one immense net of delicate meshes: it dips with a slow and stealthy motion into the water, and, as it is hoisted again, you see the fish leaping in its midst. Some of these fantastic, almost living creatures hang over the sea itself, from the planks and heaped stones which go out in a long double line into the water, to form a narrow harbour; fishing-boats with orange and ochre sails lie along both sides of it; and beyond, the coast is flat, dreary,

unvaried, a line of dark sand and short brown weedy grass along the edge of the grey sea.

Outside Ravenna, by whatever gate one leaves it, there is, for a certain space around the walls, a monotonous dreariness, out of which one gradually distinguishes, first, the thin line of white trees, then the vines festooned from tree to tree around the fields, the white oxen ploughing the black earth, yoked two by two in eights; then, ruddy or orange sails seen across the fields from the direction of the harbour; and, in the midst of the plain, the tower, like a lighthouse tower, of the church of S. Maria in Porto Fuori, and the bare bulk and tall round campanile of S. Apollinare in Classe, as if forgotten by the side of a road that no longer leads anywhere. Soon after S. Apollinare in Classe, woods begin. There are long and white trails of bright and painted bushes, with young pine-trees in their midst, and tangles of grass, and taller trees with grey stems and delicate branches. One treads upon brown leaves between hedges of yellowing green, which open, now and again, upon a pool or marsh, in which the water glitters between leaves and stems. It is long before the stone-pines begin, and they begin one by one, each spreading its sunshade of green lace over its own circle of grass. They stand in lines and thin clusters beside the canal, rising almost out of the bright water; and their mass thickens and darkens towards the sea, making that "reedy trembling" under a gentle wind which Dante speaks of.

As I came to the edge of the wood, and saw sails at the end of a space of brown and marshy ground, and heard the sea, a woman inside the one cottage that stood there began to sing to herself. It was a wild and melancholy dirge, and seemed to put the feeling of the place and the hour into music.

WINTER, 1903.

PISA

PISA

I

At the extreme edge of Pisa, in a corner of its battlemented walls, there is a meadow, with daisies among the bright green grass; a dusty road goes along its whole length, leading from the town into the flat country outside the gate; and on the other side of the meadow is the white low wall of the Campo Santo. Between, in the midst of the grass, there are two miraculous buildings in white marble, which the weather and the ages have turned to the yellow of old ivory, faintly banded with black: the Baptistery and the Cathedral. Beyond the Cathedral, leaning fourteen feet out of the perpendicular, away from it, a white miraculous toy, the Campanile; and beyond, over the house-tops, the placid outlines of the hills. From the top of the Campanile you can see the whole brown city, ruddy with roofs, enclosed by its battlemented walls, nested in the smooth green hollow between the mountains and the sea; the white roads on the plain, the shining curve of the Arno, and then, beyond a line of brown woods,

the faint blue streak of the sea, and what seems like a great hill coming up sheer out of it, the island of La Gorgona. Landwards, all round, there is a circle of hills, which on one side close in almost upon the town, and you catch the sparkle of the hills of Carrara.

And between this unparalleled corner and the eager modern life of the busy town there seems, at first, no kinship. The people of Pisa are wild and untamed, with something gipsy and a little savage in their aspect. Children run barefoot, or in wooden clogs without heels, and at night there are cries and clatterings in the streets, asleep so early, which lie aside from the busy main thoroughfares. The faces of girls and women, with their straight eyebrows and eyes set high under them, are often very handsome, at times lovely; and they have a wild charm, a kind of engaging impudence. The men are rough, hot-tempered, loud-tongued; the quality of the peasant as if sharpened, set on edge, soured perhaps, by town life. On the other side of a pinewood there is Leghorn, where there are sailors, Jews, the sea, one of the ways into the world.

And Pisa itself, as one roams in it, under the arcades of the Borgo, or coming out of narrow streets into broad vacant squares, or following the delicate windings of the river, has something fragile in its aspect, a quiet enveloping subtlety, which is not in keeping either with that modern life or with what is solid and unworn in the age of its vast white monuments of marble. What is it that seems to be con-

cealed here, an alluring and quite innocent mystery in things, unconscious of itself, and made out of many contraries? After Ravenna, where the whole place is subdued into a kind of sepulchral melancholy, and seems to brood feverishly over its tombs, Pisa, which is also the guardian of so much ancient death, seems to be irrelevantly awake and alive. It keeps this holy earth and these white glories as a possession, not subdued to their mood, with a life wholly apart from them.

And so it is always with the same sensation of surprise that one turns aside from the river, passes through vague streets in which the sense of life and movement dies gradually away, and comes out suddenly upon that green meadow folded into the angle of the town wall, with its three white marvels, the Baptistery, the Cathedral, and the Campanile, rising into the sky at different heights, but with the same dainty massiveness, and behind them the long white outer wall of the Campo Santo, as if it hid something formidable and mysterious. I do not know any corner of the actual world which seems so improbable, when one is actually there. A street's length away peasants shout angrily on their way from the railway-station to the market-place; the river is flowing on continually from the hills beyond Florence to the sea; and that trivial, eager life and that soft continual passing away are equally remote, as one lingers, among these relics that seem the work of magic, and to have been kept white and untouched by some magical intervention.

II

Nothing, in this group of marvels on the grass, has a separate beauty quite equal to its surprising beauty as a whole. It is composed on a vast scale, and to give the effect of daintiness; and impresses one first as some kind of giant's play-work in ivory. The aspect of the Campanile, an immense, inexplicable tube, with its pillars and rounded arches as if carved in a pattern round and round something that one could take up in one's hand, is fantastic by day, for its strangeness, its whiteness, its mocking bias; but by night it becomes ominous, overpowering, and seems to lift itself into the darkness like a solid column of grey smoke, which bends over to precipitate some vague ruin. On the other side of the meadow the Baptistery has been laid down on the grass like a jewelled casket, the largest and most splendid casket in the world. It shelters jewels, the carved pulpit of Niccolà Pisano, and, far lovelier, the baptismal font, with its lace-work in black, white, and yellow marble, circle within circle and square within square, on each of its eight sides. The most part of the Baptistery dates from the beginning of the twelfth century, and, in spite of some later additions, adding needless decoration, it has a sober grandeur, a large and elaborate simplicity, which gives one the complete satisfaction of a thing wholly organic, a natural growth. The Cathedral is faultlessly constructed, and has been a pattern to most

other work in the Tuscan Romanesque manner, yet, seen from the ground, and from in front, it is difficult to feel the same sense of satisfaction. Inside, "no place of equal splendour," says one who knows more of churches and their qualities than most men, "is quite so devout." The structure, of white marble alternating with black marble, is itself a decoration of an exquisitely severe richness. Outside, especially about the choir and transepts, the same structure (so plain, undecorated, as it seems after the stone forests of French Gothic) is no less delicate in its pale colours. But in the façade, so famous and in truth so original, with its ascending and diminishing rows of slender columns, there is, in the design an admirable symmetry, yet a symmetry whose elegance is hardly thrilling. The lower part, in the patterns around the doorways, and in the frieze of beasts which runs across above the first rows of pillars, is carved finely, and the colours inlaid in the stone are used carefully, in subordination to the structural work in carving; but, higher up, inlaid patterns are substituted, with a somewhat crowded, merely prettifying effect, for the firmer and finer outlines of carved stone. I like best to look down on the Cathedral from the top of the Campanile, for from that point it is wholly beautiful, and one sees its characteristically Pisan design, like the painted crucifixes in the Museum, the choir and transepts making the curved top and side-pieces, and the dome the raised head-piece or halo. Seen from that

height it seems to be laid out on the grass carpet like an immense crucifix of tarnished silver or old ivory.

By the side of the Cathedral, inside a low white wall, the painted cloisters of the Campo Santo, with their precious marbles, surround a long and narrow space of green grass, open to the sky. The Campo Santo is the "Memento Mori" of the Middle Ages to Italy. The paintings on the walls of these cloisters can be compared only with the German "Dances of Death," and the like, and there is in the contrast all the difference of the two races. The imagination of Orgagna, or of the Pisans who painted the "Triumph of Death," the "Last Judgment," and the "Hell" is less naturally fantastic than the German imagination; it is logical, faithful to a conception, and desires only to be very real in turning into visible shape what it has come to believe of invisible things and of things to come. The remembrances of death are brought in with crude physical horror, as the tortures of the mediæval hell are also, with a pitiless straightforwardness: the knight who stops his nose over an open grave, the horse that neighs and snuffs at the worms there. The saved folk in heaven are folk out of the painter's own city, making music and caressing their lapdogs under the trees in a Pisan meadow in summer. It is very real old men and beggars and halt and maimed folk who hold out their hands in vain supplication, as the scythed angel passes over them, on other business,

in the air. And to the painter there is a tragedy not less literal and actual in the flight of angels and devils over the little male and female souls that fly upwards out of the open mouths of sleepers. "Hell is murky," and he sees it in just such circles of bodily agony, with these prongs and snakes and flames, and devils no less scaled, and clawed, and elaborated for all the parodies of hate. These pictures on the walls are pictures secondly, and first of all teaching, a warning to those about to die. It is their intention, not their pattern, that makes them pictures; it is by their literal rendering of the beliefs of their time, it is by their sheer force as a homily in paint, that they appeal to us now, in these cloisters of this chapel of death, with a poignancy which is still contemporary.

III

Pisan art, as one sees it in the Museum, begins with miniatures, strange bright stains on parchment, of the eleventh century. Two centuries later come the paintings on wood and those singular crucifixes with their gilt halos raised from the wood of the cross, throwing the head forward. The Christs are all Jews, and Mary is a Jewess, with a simplicity untroubled by the irrationalities of tradition. The finest crucifix is one attributed to Giunta Pisano, splendid in design and colour, with its sombre richness, its elaborate decoration, its rim of

heavy gold nails; the whole horror made passionate and austere, with a tragic beauty in the lean, contorted figure, the agonised attendant faces.

And these crucifixes are seen in room after room, together with panels with gold backgrounds, set in decorative frames; all minutely painted in crude bright colours, with an earnest attempt to render the reality of earthly things and to invent some ideal beauty for spiritual things. There are works by artists of Pisa, Siena, and Florence; and one passes from picture to picture a little dazed and disconcerted by their conventions which no longer mean anything, forgotten formulas, discovering a beauty of colour here, a *naïveté* of design there, but seeing them for the most part as one reads verse in a language only partially known. There are fragments of marble among the pictures, an exquisite rose-window from the church of the Spina, a broken but still lovely and terrible monster crouched and leaning over a wall, wooden statues out of churches, with jointed hands and arms, and with a quaint conscious charm in their suggestion of slim bodies. Nothing among the pictures touched me so closely as a series of small panels from the high altar of Santa Caterina, by Simone Martini. In their dainty architectural gilt frames, against their backgrounds of gold, they have a calm, severely rich beauty of design and colour. A lovely Magdalen holds a chased casket, and there is subtlety in the long oval of the sleepy, faint, and morbid face with its ruddy hair

and jewelled band across the forehead. All these saints have plaintive, formal, expressive faces, there is a delicacy in their eyelids and long fingers, and they make sensitive gestures.

IV

Poets have loved Pisa, and are remembered there. It was its peace, says Mrs. Shelley, that suited Shelley; "our roots," he says himself, "never struck so deep as at Pisa." Byron, Shelley, and Leopardi all lived and wrote in Pisa, and there are marble tablets recording them on the houses in which they lived. Leopardi's house was in the Via Fagiuoli; Byron's and Shelley's almost opposite one another, on each side of the river. The Palazzo Lanfranchi, now Palazzo Torcanelli, is a simple, massive house of plain brown stone, the doors and windows outlined in white stone; it stands on the sunny side of the river, not far from the Ponte di Mezzo. The inscription says: "Giorgio Gordon Noel Byron qui dimorò dall' autunno del 1821 all' estate del 1822 e scrisse sei canti del' 'Don Giovanni.'" Shelley's house is on the Lung' Arno Galileo, opposite a little eastward, part of a big building with yellow plastered walls and windows; and the inscription says: "Percy Bysshe Shelley trascorse in queste mura gli ultimi mesi del 1821, l'inverno del 1822, qui tradusse in versi immortali gli affetti e le imagine che Pisa gli inspirò, e compose l'elegia in morte di John Keats,

'Adonais.'" Shelley has captured much of the soul of Pisa in two lovely poems, "Evening: Ponte a Mare," where the "slow soft toads out of damp corners creep," and the lines on "The Tower of Famine," which render the whole aspect and atmosphere of the fourteenth-century Arsenal tower, heavy and ominous, which he took to be Ugolino's. Ugolino's tower was pulled down long ago, and an inscription on the house which replaced it, at the corner of the Piazza dei Cavalieri, tells you where it stood.

In Pisa the Middle Ages are felt everywhere, but for the most part as an echo, an odour, rather than in any actual stone, literally surviving. Many of the streets keep their old quaint names unspoilt; as the Via delle Belle Torri, with its two side-streets, the Via l'Amore, and the Via del Cuore. The arcades of the Borgo remind one of Padua, and as one walks under them there are glimpses, here and there, of pillared church-fronts, or of the carving on old houses. There is the eleventh-century church of S. Pierino, with its steps leading up from the street, its heavy pillars, and fine floor of mosaic; S. Michele in Borgo, with its façade in three tiers, of pillars and trefoliated arches, severer in design than the façade of the Cathedral; there is the admirable S. Paolo a Ripa d'Arno; and there is the thirteenth-century Santa Maria della Spina, the sailor's church, set down like a white and black trinket, on the banks of the Arno. Begging brothers of the Misericordia pass

you in the streets, with their black livery, black hoods, and vast black hats slung upon their backs. Girls and women stand chattering about the many fountains, drawing water, and carrying it in small copper cans, all of one pattern, shaped delicately like ancient vases. But, for the most part, that sense of peace, that placid melancholy, which comes to seem the natural atmosphere of Pisa, harmonising whatever is new, active, and stirring in it with all that remains, not only in its one enchanting corner, of past ages, is a kind of intangible charm, made up of many elements and softly transfiguring them: the languid evenings when the lights begin to come out along the river, the lovely curve of its course between red-roofed and green-shuttered houses, the boats that float down helped by oars and sail, the sight of misty hills beyond the water; sunsets that burn the sky to soft fire above the roofs; and the wind that comes up the river every night from the sea, tempered to softness as it drifts through Pisa.

V

A large part of the beauty of Pisa comes to it from the Arno, which winds through it from end to end, and can be followed into the leafy country, by a grassy path which goes beside it, always within sight of the hills, which, on a misty evening in March, are like banks of solid smoke. Under a grey sky, in the faint mist which veils the outlines

of the hills, Spring budding overhead in the trees and starring their brown branches with green, among which tiny bats fly restlessly, the night comes on gently, with a peaceful and slightly mournful charm. Coming back, I saw the long curved line of the Lung' Arno, the brown and yellow and green of the houses under a low-hanging thunder-cloud about to burst; a rich, deep, complex effect of colour, sombre and with a dull sort of intensity, as if some fierce heat smouldered there. After a rain-storm in the hills the river awakens violently, and rushes downwards, swollen, yellow, and curdled, creased and wried into wrinkles and cross-eddies. At night, looking down on it from a high window, the water is oily black, streaked with white, and the reflections of the gas lamps along the quays plunge downwards like long stakes of gold, planted in the river. Where the light strikes it one can see the tide flowing swiftly; but for the most part it is a black pit of water, dividing the town.

If you follow the river to the sea you will come to one of the loveliest places in Italy, Bocca d'Arno, where the Arno freshens into little waves as it meets the sea-waves and mingles with them. On one side of the river the sand begins, and beyond the grass there are pine-trees, green to blackness as they thicken and cut off the sky. On the other side of the river there is a flat green marsh, ending upon a dark line of trees. Above, there are jagged peaks against the sky, hills white with snow where they

rise into the white rain-clouds. Towards Pisa the hills darken, softening into gentler curves. And it seems as if nothing that is supremely beautiful in nature is not here. Here, at this lovely meeting-place, are hills, woods, valleys, a river, and the sea.

SPRING, 1904.

SIENA

SIENA

I

INFLEXIBLE Siena, St. Catherine's, is a fierce eyrie for visions, yet, planted so firmly on its rock, almost every house still at need a fortress, is as if fortified permanently against enemies. The country comes right up to its gates, and is beaten back there; the ancient walls are like a rampart, and inside them all the houses climb upward, crowding and tightening about the cathedral, until their roofs and walls almost merge into its structure. They climb to it and cling like peasants about a queen, dressed in their homely brown and soiled white and with all the patches of poverty; and the queen stands royally attired, in the supreme distinction of black and white. This concentration of the city upon itself, these close streets which twist around one another, cross and recross, and rise so high in order that they may not need to extend widely, this complete detachment from everything outside the walls which mark the city's limit, must certainly have helped the growth of that instinct from which it sprang, the instinct of proud aloofness. Siena is like a little China, and its city-walls mark

the bounds of what it chooses to keep from strangers. The image of the Middle Ages still persists in its streets, and the character of its people remains unchanged. Customs never die in Siena, and change has no temptation for the Sienese. White oxen still walk in the streets, drowsing in couples, their wide horns almost touching the walls on either side; and they drag wicker carts shaped like Roman chariots.

The modern spirit has spoiled Rome, and is daily destroying there. It is more slowly, but not less certainly, destroying Venice, with a literal, calculated destruction. Florence has let in the English, who board there, and a new spirit, not destructive, reverent of past things but superficial with new civilisation, has mingled the Renaissance with the commonplace of the modern world. But Siena is content to remain itself, neither ambitious nor dejected, busying itself with its old industries (the smell of the tanneries, as in the days of St. Catherine, never out of its streets), keeping its beautiful old things quietly, not trying to make new things like them; content with the old limits, and with all old things as they were.

And the splendour and dignity of its past still live nobly in all the walls of Siena. Its history is written there in stone, and with a lasting beauty, in the walls of all its palaces. Palaces line the streets, Gothic and Renaissance, all flat, severe, built with grey stone cut into square blocks, with

here and there a reminiscence of the less simple and admirable Florentine manner of building with partly unhewn blocks. The palaces join walls with private houses, and ask for no more space in these equalising streets, to which they add force and beauty. They accommodate themselves to the street, and turn with it, in a kind of democracy of pride. Towers, structures like prisons, gloomy remnants, which stand at street-corners or between shop and shop, come into the pattern naturally, without incongruity. All Siena is of one piece, and at night sleeps together with the same tranquil sleep.

There is in the streets at night a curious sense of quiet, not the quiet of suspense or desolation, but rather of people who prefer to stay indoors, in their own homes, with walls and windows between them and other people, in a quite friendly aloofness. The streets do not call to them, as they call to people in the South; they are corridors to walk through, not alleys to linger in; and the Sienese are not lingerers. Even by day few people stand idle in the streets; the church-square, on its height, is no meeting-place. Siena works quietly by day, and at night sleeps quietly. And, in the deserted streets, dimly lighted by gas lamps at rare intervals, you seem to walk through some mysterious excavation, with precipitous descents on every side of you, going down, you know not whither, into some lower part of the earth or of the night.

II

The streets in Siena are high and narrow, and they plunge upwards and downwards, under dark arches, as if tunnelled out of solid rock, with walls built straight, from pavement to roof, every window flat to the wall, without ledge or cornice or balcony. The streets are built to let in the wind and to keep out the sun, and around all the squares, vast and empty, walls are built against the sky, and square thin towers climb straight to the stars, each to a separate star in the stretched and many-lighted canopy. The streets are set at all angles; the walls seem to meet overhead, they plunge into invisible depths. There are streets which go down hill so rapidly that one is obliged to lean back on every step, and then straight up hill again at almost an acute angle; rarely a street which goes far on one level, and never a street which goes far in one direction without turning. One looks down from the street where one is walking, upon another which passes under it or strikes out at right angles at the bottom of a long flight of steps. One peers through an archway on a piazza of which one sees no more than the pavement and the foundation of the houses, or looks upward through an archway above a flight of steps, and sees only the tops of the houses.

In the heart of Siena there is a square, the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, which is shaped like the inside of a shell, and curves upwards from the Palazzo

Communale, with its high tower, la Mangia, which rises into the sky, red and white, with only less than the supreme elegance of the dragon's neck of Florence, the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio. The square is surrounded by tall irregular houses, built of red brick, with green wooden shutters; narrow lanes lead out of it upward and downward, and as you look through an archway you see feet walking above your head, and heads moving below your feet. The middle of the square is paved with red brick, and one walks on it as on Alps; all around are short white stone pillars, set at intervals, and beyond there is a strip of grey stone pavement, round which the horses race every year in the sport of the Palio, which has survived in Siena since the Middle Ages.

Religion too, in Siena, is a part of tradition, like the Palio, and the whole population can be seen going all one way, like a Spanish city on the day of a bull-fight, when the sermon is to end the "forty hours" at S. Domenico. In that church of St. Catherine, where Sodoma has painted her famous agony, one sees a great crowd, of townsfolk and peasants, assembling gravely, and standing patiently to listen to the sermon, which is spoken monotonously from the pulpit, all on one note, with pauses for rest between each division. It is an old usage, and the people follow it with a natural obedience. And in the same way, with simplicity, not with fervour they observe their feast-days. I was in Siena on the day of Saint Joseph, and as I went towards the little

mean church of S. Giuseppe, in its high corner, a kind of fair seemed to be going on. On both sides of the two steep streets, S. Giovanni Dupre and S. Agata, little wooden toys, that ran on wheels made of fir-cones, were being sold, and the people went up and down the two streets, dressed in their best clothes, the flapping Leghorn hats garlanded with flowers nodding grotesquely, as with an affectation of youth, on aged heads. Very soon one distinguished that these people were on their way to the church where mass was being said, and they poured in through the middle door and out through the two side-doors, and every one dropped a coin into the money-box on the table inside the door, and received in exchange a leaflet with an image of St. Joseph, and kissed it with pious gravity. It is only on festa days that Siena seems completely to waken, and it is only a few streets that are alive at any one time.

What is still most living in Siena is the memory of St. Catherine. Every child in the street offers to take you to see her house, which stands half way down the hill leading to the valley of the tanners and dyers, and to Fontebranda, the fountain which Dante remembered in hell. St. Catherine's head, a ghastly relic (of which I saw only the copy in her house, beautiful in the mortal pallor of the wax), is still kept in a shrine in S. Domenico under the altar of the chapel which Sodoma painted in her honour. It is for the sake of this relic, and because St. Cather-

ine used to come to this church to pray tnat S. Domenico is still the favourite church in Siena, though the main part of the building has been turned into barracks. The vast Gothic structure, built of red brick, massive and imposing in its simplicity, is one of the landmarks of Siena. It is on the edge of a gulf, over against the Cathedral; and on the other side of the gulf, brown and white houses climb, roof above roof, like a cluster of rocks, grouped there naturally; with, high over them, long, slender, striped in long and slender lines of black and white marble, the Cathedral, like a flower which has raised itself out of the gross red earth and its rocks.

III

The Cathedral is a house of light, and all its form and ornament are meant for the sun. Only the façade is in part disappointing, where, in the upper half, the modern mosaics bring a distracting tangle into what would have been the splendid design of the lower half. Seen from S. Domenico, on its hill, it has a clear, almost transparent beauty, a slim and supple and striped elegance in line, with its tower, so delicately symmetrical, its small grey dome supported on small and dainty pillars. Inside, what discretion, how undisfigured, how simply and harmoniously decorated for divine uses! Severity unites with sumptuousness in this distinguished inner covering of black and white marble, on walls

and pillars. Under the dome there are tall black and white pillars, bearing gilt statues; gold and blue (with the rarest traces of red) are the two colours which for the most part supplement and enrich this severe colouring. Around the roof, under the cornice of the windows, there is a fantastic series of busts of the Popes, each a mitred head, with its faint smile or closed eyes, in its separate niche, with the name, Formosus, Sivicius, or Zosimus, painted in black below. The gold on the mitres and on the lappets of the copes add faint touches of colour, and the walls below and the roof above are covered with fanciful patterns, and on the roof gold stars are set on a background of blue sky. In the choir, with its lovely carved wood and intarsia, stands the pulpit of the Pisanos, with its little carved world of men and the homely life of its beasts. Donatello's St. John stands in one of the side chapels named after the saint, and the five small frescoes of Pinturicchio have faded to a discreet dimness, in which one sees, not too distinctly, lovely landscapes of grass and trees and hills; and there is a fresco of Pinturicchio over an altar.

The Library of the Cathedral, where the sculptured three Graces used to stand, when Raphael saw them, is at first sight too dazzling, and the ten frescoes seem to have been painted by Pinturicchio yesterday. The splendour strikes harshly, and it is some time before we can accustom our eyes to the new aspect of this room, which is like a missal turned

fresco. It is to avoid the sinking of the paint into the plaster, and that dulness which is in itself so attractive in fresco-painting, that Pinturicchio uses so much gold, whenever it can be used, on vestments, ceilings, canopies, altar-frames, on the bridles of horses, on belts, chains, and brooches, using stucco to give salience to the gold. He paints in clear crude colours, with little shading, and he uses some astonishing reds and greens and blues, which cry out like trumpets from the midst of these pomps and ceremonies. The Raphaelesque air of these gracious young men and of these elegant old men would bring a new quality into painting at Siena, with all that Pinturicchio chose out of the actual world: these decorative yet actual crowds, these knights on horseback, these Popes in benediction, these white-cowled monks, and grave Easterns in turbans. But in his gold and brightness and love of beautiful ornament he was but following in the tradition of the Sienese painters; he was but realising some of their dreams, not without even a little of the hardness which with them went with their brightness, though with a purely human quality, a delighted sense of the earth, to which the growths and ornaments of the earth could give entire satisfaction.

Nothing so bright was ever put on a wall as the picture of that room in which Æneas Sylvius is made cardinal: that ceiling of gold embossed in gold, that red and green of canopy and curtain, that gold altar-front and the gold frame of the altar-piece,

with the glowing white marble of the altar-slab and of the floor and of the steps to the throne. It is as if the wall opened, and the room, not the picture of it, the actual room and crowd, were there.

But what is most individual in the beauty of the Cathedral decoration lies underfoot. The whole centre of the floor is carefully covered with wood, and it is only in the aisles that one can see the pictures cut out in thin outline as if engraved in the stones, which is the art peculiar to Siena. Battles are fought out with lances; there are figures of the Sibyls, with elaborate robes; friezes of winged lions; with scenes and stories of a great energy of movement, as in the many-coloured "Massacre of the Innocents" by Matteo di Giovanni (his favourite subject) with its border of laughing children looking down from windows and balconies, the helpless women with their babies, the merciless swordsmen, woven into a lovely decoration of tossing arms and swords and babies brandished in the air. Nowhere else has stone so flowered into daintiness, into so delicate an image of life; not, as elsewhere, detached, in the great art of sculpture, but like pictures, like drawings (as indeed they are called: *Graffiti*), like scratchings on slate. The Sienese love of minute finish in decoration is seen not only in their early paintings, but in tiny patterns cut in stone over doorways, like engraved work, in the painting of the under part of their jutting roofs, and, above all, in this manner of engraving stones as others carved wood, choosing

the hardest material, for its difficulty, and making it, by the patience of their skill, a sumptuous thing. It is a way of turning the hard pavement under one's feet into a painted carpet.

IV

In early Sienese art, so Byzantine in manner, one is struck by its elaborate finish, and by a love of rich ornament, of bright pure colour, which is, however, grave and gentle, and at first used only to paint the beauty of Heaven and of the angels, and then the earthly splendour of the Popes, and lastly the divine humanity of St. Catherine and S. Bernardino, the two people of genius whom Siena gave to the angels. Duccio paints the faces of his Madonnas green, in order to suggest a superhuman countenance in which there is none of the human ruddiness of flesh. With St. Catherine another, human pallor, comes into painting, and Sodoma, with his new, more accomplished means, strives to paint ecstasy, and once, in the "Swoon of St. Catherine" in S. Domenico, renders marvellously that death in life. In Sodoma, Sienese painting begins to become self-conscious, and he leads the way to the worst and feeblest extravagances of Beccafumi and Pacchiarotto. He is never quite sincere, or wholly given up to the thing he is doing, and he lets his feelings or his rhetoric or his skill carry him in many directions. But, before he destroyed Sienese art, he left at least

one example of how what the early painters had been trying to do by pious formulas, the rendering of superhuman ecstasies, could be done, quite literally, by sheer painting.

What is really most profound, personal, and exquisite in Sienese painting is to be found in Duccio, who in his earliest work is purely Byzantine, and in all his work purely mediæval. His vast altar-piece in the Opera del Duomo, the "Majestas," is hieratic, formal, conventionally bright, but what warm personal feeling there is in even what is least individualised in the figures of the Madonna and Child, with their gold halos and the pattern of gold on their scarcely faded robes, the burnished blue robe of the Virgin, and the bright robes of the attendant saints, each with gold halo distinct against a background of ruddier gold. And what sense of drama, how many kinds of beauty, what delicate feeling, in the numberless little scenes out of the Gospel, broken up into arbitrary squares and sections in what was once the back of the picture. It is all much more realised than in many Sienese paintings in compartments, painted with no more than a child's notion of what reality ought to be. Yet it is still to some extent image-making. But between this image-making and the modern rhetoric of Sodoma there is an art more vital than Sodoma's, and not wholly aloof from the decorative reality of the earlier work. Matteo di Giovanni and Sodoma are to be seen in a single chapel in S. Agostino. The "Massacre of the Innocents" has a violent loveliness

which is rarer and more penetrating than anything which Sodoma ever attained. The packed angry crowd is as it were squeezed together, every face individually alive; the grim swordsmen, the mocking Jew Herod, who sits enthroned in the very midst of the slaughter, the agonised women, the father who kneels beside his wife and stretches out his arms tenderly over the dead child in her lap. And the gestures are terrible: the sword thrust into the mouth of the babe, as the mother all but escapes with it, the gold-hilted daggers gripped hard, high in the air, the clutching hands, and feet trampling on the dead, the strange decorative rim of dead babies set symmetrically along the floor in the front of the picture, the older children who look in through pillared windows, laughing idly. And this painter has a like care for the beauty of dresses, worked with gold, and falling in lovely folds, and for the scrupulous coils of hair and falling curls, and for the gold ornaments over Herod's throne, and for the squares and circles of cosimato work in the floor stained with little, sufficient stains of blood. Over the altar Sodoma has painted an "Adoration of the Magi," and it is full of all the obviousness of beauty, of lyrical cries of colour, from here, from there: this crowned youth with a face in which the Leonardo smile has deepened to consciousness, this kneeling king with his effective manly grace, the effective violence of the negro king standing by his side, the doll-like Virgin and Child, St. Joseph posed for the display

of a muscular bare arm; and beyond, a cavalcade, trees, rocks, a shadowy castle on a hill, glimpses of a faint valley; all made of conscious charm, of a beauty not organic, an applied beauty.

Elsewhere, as in S. Bernardino, where the really fine Sodoma is the "Coronation of the Virgin," there is more of this wildly luxurious colour and languid form, nudes of romantic softness, strange spots of feverish colour, as in the leopard-skin and purple girdle of St. John, and in the melting white drapery of the Virgin, and in the ruddy hair and beard of Christ. But what all this leads to is to be seen tragically on another wall, in Beccafumi's "Death of the Virgin," where the fever of Sodoma passes into delirium, and splashes in coloured waves all over the picture.

V

There is in the ardent and concentrated beauty of Siena something almost artificial, as of a city on a hill in an old picture. From the fortifications one can see the whole city, the houses set tightly side by side, flat, many-windowed, brown and white, brown-roofed, tier above tier, without visible space between; all clustered together, as if for safety or friendliness, and all leading up to the long and narrow Cathedral, with its dome and tower, which seems to draw all this irregular mass into a single harmony. All around it is the peace of a green world, falling into

valleys where there is red earth and dark and pointing cypresses and the grey mist of olives, and rising into little hills where bells swing on the roofs of brown monasteries. As the valley dips and rises the colours darken, and, beyond the valley, hills begin pale green and grey, and then, against the sky lighted at sunset, a luminous dark blue, like the colour of storm-clouds. Far off the hills seem to break like quiet waves, in long curved lines, against the white shore of sky. Seen after sunset it is as if a great missal, painted by Sienese artists, had been set upright between earth and sky; a sky rose-coloured and blue and gold, the outlines of the hills drawn sharply against a gold background, purple-black, with depths of colour glowing through darkness, and lighted at the edges with miraculous gold.

VERONA

VERONA

I

In Verona the gutters are of marble. The ledge you lean upon, the flight of steps going up outside a house, the posts which block a street against wheels, the fountain in the market-place, are all made of white or red marble. Pillars of white or red marble hold up the overhanging roofs of shops, and the shop-keepers paste their advertisements over the marble. Every street has its marble doorway, window, or balcony, shaped after a fine Renaissance pattern or carved with beautiful ornament. The Loggia in that Piazza dei Signori which holds so much history in its stones shows only in its harmony of delicate proportions and faint colors, white and gold and pink, a subtler and more conscious use of the materials which lie ready to the hand everywhere in Verona.

In an angle near the Ponte Navi, made by the Via Leoni and the Lungadige Bartolomeo Rubele, is an old fragment of white marble, on which two old and sleepy lions, wounded and worn with age, crouch on each side of a low pediment. To the

right and left is a short marble pillar, with a square cross in a circle carved upon it. Over the tops of the houses, opposite the river, one sees the red and white tower, and the choir with its pointed gables set between slender cone-topped pillars, of the Gothic church of San Fermo Maggiore. In this huddle of white stone which lies, uncared for, in the road, before the doors of two shops, the forms are still alive, though sunk into the uneasy sleep of the wounded; for the back of one of the lions is clean broken away, and the faces of both have gone dim, as if rubbed and washed out by rains and dust. Not far off, along the Via Leoni, is the Arch of the Lions, a beautiful fragment of a double Roman gateway, built into the wall of a house, with a shop-window fitted into the arch, and oil-lamps in the shop-window; it stands there, just turned aside from the tram line, a beautiful and indestructible thing, all its forms washed over and half obliterated, but still keeping the pathetic grace of a broken statue.

And there are monsters everywhere, in red and white marble, crouching at the doors of churches and leaning over from the lintels, and carved in slabs let into the walls of houses. A very dreadful beast, with a face like a wheel, squats over the side doorway of the Cathedral, clutched, I think, from behind by another beast whose home is in the stone; and over the pillar on the other side of the doorway there is another fantastic wrestle. At the main

doorway there are two monsters of red marble, which still look alive and hardly older after seven centuries; their fur ribbed elegantly in conventional patterns along their smooth sides, and on one of them a strange design of a wheel, as if stamped into its flesh. They have not the solemn humour of the two red marble lions outside St. Mark's at Venice, homely, companionable beasts; but are fierce and watchful. They have the heads of cats or tigers, and one of them lays its heavy claws upon two rams' heads, which it crushes under it, while the other clutches the coils of a great snake which bites it with wide-open jaws. Columns of twisted and fluted red marble are set on their backs, and columns of smooth white marble stand behind them; and they help to hold up the under arch of the square doorway, with its alternate layers of smooth red marble and carved white marble.

And the two colours of Veronese marble, red and white, are repeated in bricks, in pavements, in castles, churches, palaces, and bridges; and at sunset the whole city seems to flush with ruddy light. After the lamps are lighted the colours are still visible. Square towers rise white and red above the houses, and everywhere there are tall archways which open upon lines of ruddy walls, or upon the gold blackness of a narrowing street.

II

In the Piazza Erbe there is a marble fountain of

the time of Berengarius I.; a later statue, a little distracting, has been added to it, but its original design is the most simple and ample of any fountain I know. The basin is but slightly hollowed, and the water falling into it overflows upon a pavement that slopes outwards only just enough for the water to pour off it into a narrow rim around its edge, from which it is drained off on one side through an iron grating. The Tribuna, the other marble columns, the column with the lion of St. Mark, set there when Verona became tributary to Venice, stand about it in the Piazza; and all over the ground white umbrellas rise like a wood of tall mushrooms, covering the stalls of fruit and vegetables, each umbrella set solidly into its wooden box, upon which it stands furled at night like a great unlighted altar candle. The Piazza Erbe is the most individual square that I know; hardly two houses are of the same century, and each has its own personal quality. There is one house eight stories high; an ancient carved pillar stands in front of it; but it is mean, discoloured, the plaster blackened, the green shutters peeled and stained; it is but two windows in breadth, and under almost every window there is a fragment of carved stone under the rusty iron balcony. The frescoes in the Casa Mazzanti, Can Grande's house, where Dante was a guest, are not yet all gone from the walls; poor people look out between them from every window, and look on a square hardly changed except for its tram line.

In the Via Mazzanti, at the back of the Piazza Erbe, the house of the Scalas is covered with balconies in long lines, with others set irregularly; and a tall outer staircase goes up along the wall to the third story. A few fine windows are still left, and below, clamped by long trails of iron hanging from the walls on each side of the narrow street, is a marble well, its eight sides covered with florid effective carving coloured to many shades by age and dust. On the walls of the house, beside the Volto Barbaro, a passage which goes under fragments of old brick-work, looking out from the midst of modern building, there is an inscription, typical of many which may be seen in Verona: "Mastino I della Scala, eletto Podestà nel 1260, Capitano del Popolo nel 1261, cadde ucciso a tradimento li 17 Ottobre 1277, presso questo volto da ciò detto Barbaro." ("Mastino I della Scala, elected Podestà in 1260, Captain of the People in 1261, fell, treacherously slain, the 17th October, 1277, near this arch, thence called Barbarous.")

The Piazza was once the Forum, when Verona was Roman; now it is the fruit-market, and the tram runs backwards and forwards through it all day long, down the street of the lions, and past the house where they tell you Juliet lived. I was walking through it after dark, and I heard a thin tinkle of music coming out between half-closed shutters. Looking through them, I saw the waiter of the "Deposito di Birra," in his shirt-sleeves, whirled

round in the arms of a customer who wore a hat and was smoking a Virginia. A moment later the landlady and a woman who had been sitting at one of the tables waltzed past the window. The guitar tinkled, the dancers laughed, stopped, and went back to the tables at which they sat or waited.

III

When I try to call up Verona, it is always the cypresses of the Giardino Giusti, and the tall terraces which their tops almost reach, that come first to mind. They are among the oldest cypresses in Europe, and among the tallest. I remember a bronze label on one incredibly wrinkled, dry, wizened, but still living bark, attesting it to have stood there four hundred years. The lean, ancient things stood as straight as pillars; the whole slender stem seemed to sway down with every breath of wind, as I looked down on them from the height from which one sees across Verona to the Apennines. A cypress never looks young, and these, when one saw only the sombre green fur of their foliage, looked no older than any cypresses in any Turkish graveyard. To pass under them, and look close, was to see how like is the work of time, working by centuries upon the vegetable life of trees, to the work of time on the little animal lifetime of men.

And then, as I think again of Verona, I see the church porch at the end of the street to which I

came back every day, Sant' Anastasia, with its ribbed brick-work and the marble arch of the doorway, and the fresco of the lunette. The bronze gates of San Zeno, each with its twenty-four reliefs, in the literal twelfth-century manner; the plain arches of the Roman bridge, and the wing-like Ghibelline battlements of Can Grande's bridge of the fourteenth century, with its inner galleries; a glimpse of old tall houses going right down into the river, as one sees them in Canaletto's pictures of Verona, done before the embankment straightened and spoiled it; and then the lizard which I saw clinging to the wall of the hotel as I looked out of the window, and the inch-long snake which lay asleep by the side of the pavement: these, by I know not what unconscious choice of the memory, come back before my eyes, and help to station Verona. And, as vividly as anything there, I see the old water-seller who sat just aside from the Via Nuova, her copper-topped table of green wood with its pattern of brass nails, made to fit between the two short pillars of red marble with tops of white marble which stood at the entrance of the alley; the bottles with brass stoppers which held some coloured liquid, the large copper can which held the water, and the vast copper bowl with water for washing the glasses.

IV

The Via Nuova is a narrow street which leads

from the Piazza Erbe to the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; it is a street of shops, closed at both ends to traffic, like the Sierpes at Seville, and, like that, it is the evening promenade, or the beginning of a promenade which expands into that immense square which contains the Arena in one corner, leaving enough space over for the Municipio, the old Guard-house, and the mediæval gateway of the Viscontis, besides a palace, cafés, shops, around no more than its outer edges. Beside the Arena the oldest things in Verona are new, and look already passing into decay. When Dante walked in it, it was a ruin, and since that century it has suffered little except at the hands of the restorers. It was built for cruel use, not for beauty; and there is a sternness in its aspect which would suit ill with any not serious or deadly sport. But now, browned, defaced, the whole skeleton of its walls left naked, one ruinous fragment of an outer wall still standing, unsupported and in all the disarray of age, it has that beauty of use, order, and strength which we have learned to see in the unadorned and very simple building of the Romans, almost wherever two stones are left on one another and not yet cast down. Seen at night, with a purple sunset facing it across the gate of the Viscontis, and a tragic moon breaking through clouds, in a circle of white light, behind and above the great curve of its wall, it has another, romantic, almost Gothic, aspect, like that of those ruins of the Middle Ages which we begin to tire of, as being, like Swiss scenery, too

picturesque, too splendidly arranged for effect. But a quieting of the clouds brings it back to its austerity.

In the evenings the band plays in the Piazza, and the chairs of the cafés spread right across the broad pavement, and the people walk slowly up and down, coming from the Via Nuova, passing by the Arena, and going nearly up to the old gateway. I sat there with great content, thinking of other city squares where I had sat watching the people from a chair set on the pavement outside a café, and I wondered whether in even the great square of St. Mark's, where I should be in a few evenings from then, I should find more to remember, in what my eyes rested on, or a more adventurous point of flight for dreams.

AUTUMN, 1903.

BOLOGNA

BOLOGNA

This sad and learned town, which I have seen only under a thin, continuous rain which made its streets of arcades seem a matter of course, revealed itself to me with a certain severe charm, a little fantastic also, fascinating rather the mind than the senses. Coming from Naples, I suddenly felt the North. In the bedroom of my hotel, where I heard the rain fall, outside my door, on the little open balcony over the central court, I remembered that for a month I had been sleeping where I could look from my bed and see nothing but sky and sea, both seeming to be equally far below me, in the hollow of a great plain. Walking in these covered streets, I saw only Northern faces hurrying past me; students with their black-hooded mackintoshes, like the hooded cloak of Faust on the stage; women with covered heads, their faces distressed because of the rain; farmers, gross as their cattle, who might have been coming to an English market. The sun had gone out, and all the bright colour seemed to have faded from the world.

But, perhaps a little from the force of that very contrast, the browns and greys of Bologna seemed to

me to have a singular and a very personal beauty. The crinkled brown of the unfinished front of S. Petronio, the dull brown brick-work of the two towers, the reddish-brown of S. Domenico, in its desolate square; all the many-shaded grey of colonnades, of the University, of the courts seen through open doorways, under their arches, seemed to compose themselves to suit the whole picture of a town shut in upon itself since the Middle Ages, and still keeping so much of the Middle Ages within its walls. I found something bewildering in these unending churches, church within church, as in the sevenfold Santo Stefano, with their irregular architecture, their strange, primitive frescoes, their many carvings, tombs of saints and kings, their crypts cumbered with pious relics, eighth-century fonts, ninth-century sarcophagi, their cloisters, two-storied, and now overgrown with grass. Wherever I went in Bologna I came upon something mediæval: a church, a pillar, a public building, the Podestà dwindling away under the portico of Vignola into cafés and shops; and, more typical, because more fantastic than anything else, the two leaning towers, serving no purpose, not in themselves beautiful, but, like most of the caprices of the Middle Ages, lasting, a lasting wonder, a riddle without an answer, a sort of gigantic joke, stupefying as the jokes of Rabelais.

In the picture gallery, among many indifferent pictures and some admirable ones, showing historically the whole course of Bolognese art, there is a

roomful of Francias, from the formal, hard early manner of the worker in *niello* to the gentle and severe mastery of the later work. Francia shows me something of Bologna, in these intent, instructed faces, to whom life has always been a closed thing, shut in upon by walls, whose meditation has never been soft, or luxurious, or a flower of the sunlight, whose dreams have never been of very distant horizons. There is no mystery in his pictures, always the serious joy or the grave sorrow of unimpassioned people; and I have seen in the streets just those oval, placid women's faces, conscious of the day and the hour. His colour is clear, definite, but without splendour, or that shade which is the shadow of intense light. Like Bologna, he appeals rather to the mind than to the senses, and chiefly to a mind whose chief concerns are with those hundred and thirty churches, those twenty monasteries, which the city holds within its walls.

But the most profound impression which I received in this old, sad, learned town, the slumber of whose colonnades is disturbed, after all not unsympathetically, by the boisterous youth, eternally renewed, century after century, of students, was the impression which I received from the Museo Civico. I was the only visitor that inclement day, and I congratulated myself on being safe from interruption. But gradually, as I moved from room to room in that silence, amongst all those spoils of Etruscan and Italic sepulchres, the weight of so much, so ancient, and

so forgotten death began to weigh upon me. I moved from room to room, and still I found myself among earthly bones, in which all the violence of a life which had come to an end so many centuries ago seemed still a-gasp in those mouths without lips, those sockets without eyes, those long, knotted, fleshless fingers. And by their side, in case after case, were all the little household things which those very hands, perhaps, had carried thoughtlessly; the hairpins of dead women, their earrings, their bronze mirrors, delicately worked, which had shown, perhaps, those very faces to themselves when they were yet flesh. I went into other rooms, but beside the instruments of music, their metal rusted, their strings slack and broken, I was pursued by the thought of the hands that had lifted them, the fingers that had sounded their notes. I turned to the coins, the medals; and there, in these delicately incised heads, Cellini's or John of Bologna's, I could see only that they were the portraits of dead men and women, and that the pride of life which had perpetuated them was after all only another glory which had gone down into the dust, ridiculously despoiled by death. Why was it, what unexpected, too convincing logic in these silent things, in the particular place where I saw them, the particular mood which I brought to the seeing of them? I cannot quite account for it, but never in any other museum (those mortuaries of civilisation laid out as a perpetual *chapelle ardente* for our amusement)

had I felt so acutely the pathos of transitory things not suffered to die; many separate houses, which had each been a home, turned into a public show; never had I felt such an odour of death, not even in Pompeii.

Going a little hurriedly into the open air, I met a band of students who passed me with a joyous unconcern, untouched by the gathered trouble of the past or by any sense of sadness in the covered streets which echoed under their feet. Their audacious modernness, their confident youth, came to me with a singular relief, and, heedless of most things as they seemed just then to be, I remembered the not less confident motto of their university: "Bononia docet."

Spring, 1897.

BERGAMO AND LORENZO LOTTO

BERGAMO AND LORENZO LOTTO

All around Bergamo one sees the landscape backgrounds of early Italian pictures: on one side the mountains, and, stretching out to the mountains or to the sky, wide flat plains, set with short trees like bushes, and with square patches of cultivated ground, a green level space ending on the sky in a mist. Here and there a little hill, like an abrupt rock, rises out of the plain. And the colours, as evening comes on, are the colours of a Luini fresco, greens and reddish browns, mingled just as they are on the plaster. Looking upwards from the Città Bassa, the Città Alta rises out of the plain, almost suddenly, up a green hill; you see the long deep wall of the ramparts, lined along the top with walnut trees; above, tiers of white, flat, brown-roofed, many-windowed houses, like a Spanish, or Eastern, city; here and there a tower, a spire, a dome, or an arch. Roads climb the hillsides in terraces, and you see their straight lines turning abruptly, as they go higher. The houses are large and solid, and as you walk through the climbing streets you see, over your head, the roofs almost meet across the little gaps of sky. Now and again the streets broaden into

a square of many angles. The Piazza Garibaldi has at one end Scamozzi's unfinished palace, its three uncompanioned statues standing against the sky; and at the other end, where the square of simple flat houses narrows, the Gothic Palazzo Vecchio, with its arcades, through which one sees the twelfth-century front of Santa Maria Maggiore, and a part of the over-decorated Capella Colleoni, like a casket of turned ivory, with one angle and the steps of the Cathedral. At the side there is a pillared staircase, roofed with rough red tiles, which goes up by abrupt stories of house-tops to a square tower, with I know not what romantic charm in its aspect. There is a florid monument to Garibaldi in the midst of the square, but the beautiful arches of the Palazzo Vecchio end the space, opening to let the sight through upon pillars, curved stone steps, and the gateway of the lions.

In the lower town, people go briskly about their business, and there is a continual coming and going of diligences from the country, and of trams trotting from the railway station to the funicular railway which takes you to the higher town. There are broad squares, with stalls of books and fruit in them, and low buildings like dilapidated almshouses, intersected by narrow streets, which form a kind of *cité* between the two squares. The tram trots under a deep alley of chestnuts, and you seem at every point to be at the edge of the country. The funicular railway goes up through trees and among

houses, and sets you down not far from the wooded ramparts, which go all round the higher town, broad and dusty promenades which at certain points remind one of the Kalemegdan at Belgrade.

Coming downwards from the higher town, by a road which goes under the Porta Sant' Agostino, just below the ruined Gothic church, now a barrack, which stands on one of the highest heights, you go through an alley of acacias to the Accademia Carrara, in which three picture galleries are united, one of them containing the pictures left to his birthplace by Giovanni Morelli. Here and throughout Bergamo, in seven different churches, you are continually meeting with Lorenzo Lottos. All through the Città Alta there are churches, some of them locked, and most of them but poorly cared for, with frescoes left to peel off the walls and altarpieces half concealed by the gilt frippery of religion. In the Cathedral there is a splendid little Madonna, which Morelli thought was a Bellini, but which Mr. Berenson tells us is a Bissolo: it is hidden away in a dark frame, like a wooden box, at the back of the high altar. But above all there are Lottos. In the Accademia there is the "Betrothal of St. Catherine," in which conscious figures stand and lean as if they were set there for some gracious or elegantly sentimental effect, the dignity of fine peasant models smoothed out into prettiness. In the portrait of a woman against a sky in which a gold moon breaks through storm-clouds, there is a sumptuous

quality of real charm in this face,which has character as well as prettiness, a face like an Ingres, with rich detail of rings and chains and pearls in necklace and fillet, and an elaborate red hat with cunningly rendered gold bows. In Santo Spirito there is a Madonna with saints, shoals of angels adrift on tinted and tufted clouds, in which the prettiness has no fineness; it is wholly done for effect, and the quality of the paint has the quality of the feeling, with a kind of actual acidity in its colour. In the queer, shut-up church of San Michele al Pozzo Bianco, there are some frescoes in which we see much of what is best in this feminine and never quite sincere painter. They are half hidden by gilt altar-pieces, and parts of them have been plastered over, but there is real charm, with an unusual simplicity, in these quiet green landscapes, in which Mary and the Child ride on a little shaggy donkey, and Joseph toils uphill carrying a pack on his back. There is the marriage of the Virgin, and her birth, done with broad washes of plain colour, and a charming figure of the Virgin, at her marriage, in white, with green leaves in her hair. But in San Bernardino in Pignolo there is a Madonna (obscured behind great red hangings and gilt gewgaws) painted in that smooth way, with that forced, self-conscious elegance of attitude, which gives its air of insincerity to so much of Lotto's work. And again, in San Bartolomeo, there is a throned Madonna, with sprawling angels above and

crowded saints below, which, full as it is of effective ability, of ready design, of undistinguished but telling colour, has the rhetorical quality of the theatre, with the insincerity of every form of rhetoric.

To see the Lotto one goes into the choir, behind the high altar; and, turning away dissatisfied from what clamoured for one's attention in the altar-piece, I looked, at first carelessly, and then as closely as the dim light would let me, at the intarsia work of the stalls, done by Fra Damiano in 1520, four years after the picture. Here, in this supple and vigorous work in wood, I saw what could be done by a fine artist in the handling of somewhat intractable material. The work was broad or minute at will; with splendid masses and division of colour in some designs which seemed to represent the Deluge, sharp, clear, firmly outlined in the patterns of streets and houses; full of rich colour in the setting of wood against wood, and at times almost as delicate as a Japanese design. There was the head of John the Baptist laid on a stone slab, which was like a drawing of Daumier. And, in the whole composition of the design, with its two ovals set on each side like mirrors for the central horror, there was perfect balance. The work throughout was firm, fine, delicately elaborated; every stall was a picture, complete in itself, and with a quality of sincerity which I had looked for in vain in the altar-piece of Lotto. The contrast set me thinking. I am not judging Lotto by all that is known of him, by his

best portraits, like that portrait of an old man in the Brera, but Lotto as we see him at Bergamo, a painter of religious pictures in which he aims at rendering a certain kind of reality. And the criticism of Fra Damiano upon his contemporary the famous painter seemed to me the criticism of a thing, comparatively humble in itself, but in itself wholly satisfying, upon the failure of a more conspicuous endeavour, which has made its own place in art, to satisfy certain primary demands which one may logically make upon it.

1903.

BRESCIA AND ROMANINO

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Brescia is broad and leisurely, with arcades and squares, churches and palaces; and the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and the Resorgimento live there comfortably together. There was hard fighting here in 1849, and there are monuments to those who fell in the streets. And these modern statues and reliefs of men with muskets are seen side by side with Roman columns of the first century, early Christian basilicas, palaces of the twelfth century, elaborate Renaissance façades, and the numberless white marble fountains, of different ages and of many admirable designs, which bring the sound of water into these clean and not crowded streets. Everywhere fine doorways open into *patios*, with green grass, trees, pillars, and a fountain; it might be Spain, only there are no *rejas*, none of the beautiful iron gates which in Spain shut off the *patio* from the street. And one comes constantly upon fine old buildings, turned now to humble uses, but kept with a certain care and cleanliness. Wine-presses stand in the side streets, and one hears the grapes splashing and cracking, as a dirty man with purple legs dances in the barrel. And there are wine-screws out of which

one sees men taking bowls of crushed red skins, like a kind of purple peat.

The people of Brecsia go quietly about their streets, and on Sunday evenings sit down by the pavement while the band plays outside the cafés under the arcades. One might be at Venice, at Florian's or the Quadri, but there is no St. Mark's and, indeed, no Piazza. The street, at that part of the Corso, is very broad, and from half-past eight to ten the trams stop, little toy trams which trot in an antiquated way, each with its one lean horse. A policeman in a tall hat and frock-coat, holding a tasselled cane, sets up two heavily-weighted notice boards at each end of a given length of the tram line. On these boards the words "Passagio pei soli pedoni" are painted in writing characters on three music staves in the treble clef. At ten o'clock the tram, which has been waiting, begins to trot again, and the people go home.

The people (except for a strange breed of dwarfs, chiefly women, who are not deformed, but no more than half-size) remind me a little of Venice. There are the same small creatures, women and girls, who wear black shawls or black lace mantillas over their heads, and pass by twos and threes, quietly, with watchful eyes, always with beautiful hair, which in the very old women turns to a kind of crisp white wool. There is no model of Romanino or of Moretto whom I did not see in the streets, and I saw also some smaller and more piquant faces, delicately

featured, which I do not find in the work of the two painters of Brescia.

People go to Brescia for the sake of Moretto and of Romanino, who make up a little Brescian school of their own and whose work is chiefly to be seen there. Walter Pater, with something more than sympathy, has interpreted all that is best in the work of this "Rubens in Italy" and his companion in the paper called "Art Notes in North Italy." Going to Brescia and to Bergamo, it was with an aroused curiosity that I went through the galleries and had the doors of many churches unlocked for me. I never tried so hard to like the work of any painter as I have tried to like the work of Moretto, nor failed so completely. Everything of Moretto has vigour, yet the vigour rarely reaches fineness; his skill in the use of colour ends before the touch of illumination has come; his design is never, even at its best, free from a certain conventional correctness. He has been praised for his "subdued silvery tone" and for a Venetian richness of colouring. Neither in his richness nor in his severity does he show the instinctive qualities of a great colourist; he is always capable, never subtle, never really distinguished. What has been called ideality in him is a sentiment which, however sincere it may be in itself, is unable to express itself, except very rarely, in a sincere way. He is the type of all that is skilful, telling, and energetic; his aim is serious, and his capacity considerable, but he remains, a little out in the cold, between the

great painters and the painters who, without being great, have carried some individual charm to perfection. He is no one's favourite painter.

In the work of Romanino (who was born thirteen years before Moretto, in 1485, and who survived him eleven years) I find it more possible to be interested, and I am able to look on Romanino with a kind of respect which Moretto rarely exacts from me. In the Corpus Domini Chapel of San Giovanni there are frescoes by both painters, side by side, the younger man still obviously under the influence of the elder. But as one compares the works of the two men, how much more simple, downright, really seen and felt, are the Romaninos! They remind me at certain points of the work of Madox Brown; one picture in particular, of Christ in the house of the Pharisee, where the Magdalen kneels almost under the table, as she bends over to kiss the feet of Christ, with a natural movement of quaint awkwardness. Moretto has painted the scene in the church of Santa Maria Calchera, less theatrically than usual, and with an almost literal copy of the queer attitude: the body arched over and the head drooping. I do not find much more than skill and a somewhat superficial simplicity in the well-known Romanino in that church, the "St. Apollonius." But in the church of San Francesco there is a "Madonna and Saints" behind the high altar which shows us, certainly, all that Romanino can do. Seen from the doorway, it glows with a rich and sombre colour,

as if wrought out of darkness; and the colour has sobriety, like the design, in which a form wholly traditional seems to come alive, with a character of its own. There is a Virgin with slightly sullen lips and eyes; there are fine kneeling figures below, in green and gold cloaks. Something of what is more earnest and personal in Romanino is seen in the "Supper at Emmaus" in the Palazzo Martinengo, with its sombre quality of paint, its directness of representation. And whenever he is seen in company with Moretto, as in that gallery and in the old Cathedral, where all the bravura of Moretto is heard clamouring, he impresses one by what is simple and sincere in his statement of things. Is it only by comparison? At least I have never felt so forbidding an aspect in any picture gallery as in that picture gallery at Brescia, where Moretto and Romanino surround one with their hard, capable, and unlovely work. I find myself turning by preference to the Romaninos, but with little satisfaction. And for once I find a Raphael, which brings a certain relief and coolness to the eyes, as I turn to the small, minute, and really beautiful head of Christ wearing the crown of thorns, painted at Florence, but still under the influence of Perugino. There I saw a thing wholly achieved, not half way to accomplishment; and I became all the more conscious of the very definite point at which Romanino had stopped.

1903.

ON A REMBRANDT IN MILAN

ON A REMBRANDT IN MILAN

I HAD spent an hour in the Brera, and I was a little weary of the beauty of consciously beautiful things. From the Lombard frescoes of the fourteenth century, down to Procaccini and Crispi, every Italian picture is an attempt to create beauty; beauty first and everything else afterwards. I remember that when I was in Spain it seemed to me as if only the Italians had realised how pictures should be painted. In Spain the dramatic sense has obscured the sense of beauty; there must be a story told spectacularly, with all the gestures of the emotion, and if beauty comes into it at all it comes as an ornament to a scene otherwise conceived. But after an hour in the Brera I begin to feel a certain monotony and a certain lifelessness in these beautiful persons, who seemed to have existed in the world only that they might be painted; in these scenes that had never happened except in a painter's studio; in all that was artificial from the beginning in these pictures painted for ornament. There is a Raphael which has a room to itself, like the Raphael at Dresden; the "Sposalizio," which the official catalogue, like the guide-books, honours with three

stars in the margin. It is an early picture, painted in the manner of Perugino; and it is painted with an already perfectly assured skill, an easy and justified confidence which no difficulty, no sensitiveness before an ideal of something more than perfection, can abash. Looking into it closely, one sees there all that Perugino tried to do, done with decision; and all Perugino's quality, the quality which makes him interesting, gone. It is all polished away, improved clean out of existence. And there is the bright, smooth, finished thing, not a speck or crease upon it; almost as faultless and lifeless as if it had been made by a machine. It stands there alert as a champion, the typical Italian picture; and it says: "A craftsman in the trade of beauty made me; it is enough that I exist; bow down before me and own that I am worthy of three stars in the catalogue."

Raphael challenges loudly; the others are more quiet, but all smile to themselves, as they await the eyes of the tourist, with the confidence of a beautiful woman awaiting the response of her mirror. And is there anywhere a more delicate orgy of loveliness than in this gallery of Italian pictures, which is like a perfumed garden, full of all manner of flowers? This spectacle, which begins, as you enter, with the gallant kinght, St. Martin, dividing his cloak with his sword for the beggar, is a gallant spectacle, full of all the world's finery, and jewels, and brave deaths and glorified Madonnas. It is all a very serious play, as serious as the woman's tragic comedy of her

toilette; and nothing in it moves one very much, not the languid grace with which St. Sebastian receives the arrows, nor Tintoretto's flaring lights and grey corpse in the long hall underground where St. Mark appears to the Venetians. When Mantegna paints the dead Christ with what Crowe and Calvalcaselle call "disagreeable boldness," it is only, serious though it is, a game of perspective. By the side of the grey, startling thing there is the most placid of all Madonnas, Mantegna's Virgin haloed with the heads of fat child-angels, and, beside Bellini's tragic and lovely Pietà, with the woman crying, there is the little comely brown peasant Virgin, who sits so primly against the strip of green background. All Luini's patrician saints are here, dressed as carefully as if a woman had dressed them, with the white lines at their throats and wrists, their curled hair parted and falling in a few easy ripples down the neck. As flying angels carry the dead body of St. Catherine through the air, the same tress falls out from the gold tresses heaped together under her chin. An exquisite drawing, which has been worshipped as Leonardo's, and which may be his, in spite of a certain over-softness in it, shows us a Christ, full of mournfulness, and as beautiful as a woman.

I had spent an hour among these colours and perfumes, and it seemed as if my senses had begun to grow sleepy in their midst. All at once I came into a little room full of dark pictures, and in the middle

of the room, on an easel, a living thing looked at me. It was the head of a woman, plump, blonde, with rich blood in her cheeks, and thin gold hair crimped over her forehead. Her red lips were pursed together, her quite round eyes wide open, and expressing very little, except the quietly accepted fact of being alive. She was quite unconscious that I was looking at her, and, if she had noticed me, would have been indifferent to my opinion. An American lady who came into the room, and who saw me standing still and stupid in front of the picture, said kindly: "I have been in Amsterdam and it seems to me that I have seen her there. Is she not the blonde Saskia, the wife of Rembrandt?" But I looked at my catalogue, and told her that it was Rembrandt's sister.

And here, suddenly, I seemed to have found a thing which made all the rest of the pictures like an enchanting box of toys. Here was nature accepted frankly; nothing asked of nature but to be herself. In all the others, even when nature was the foundation, there had been arrangement, transposition, an aim at doing something with nature, at fitting it to a pattern or setting it to a tune. Life must be a motive for decoration, and beauty must be added, like a garment, to whatever natural charm life may seem to suggest by its existence. Here, it was life itself that grew up softly upon the canvas, without any pattern but what seemed the accident of nature (nature's truth that is) and without an

added ornament except the mere truth of paint. The white linen about the neck, the collar embroidered with jewels, shone with an actual glitter as if the paint sparkled under the light. And this paint seemed to delight in its own beauty, as the sunlight does, when it makes and brightens the colours of the world. A new art, it seemed, had been discovered, by which things themselves, anything in itself, could become eternally interesting; an art which invented a whole new, infinitely various beauty, by the mere illumination of things truthfully realised, in their precise accompaniment and subordination to life.

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BY THE SAME WRITER

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